

LITURGICAL ART: TOWARD THE INTEGRATION
OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at
Claremont, California

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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This professional project, completed by

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*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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I choose to image my existence as a precious gift and therefrom find a steady stream of blessings flowing toward me . . . to image life as a gift delivers one into an openness, responsiveness and gratitude, enriching even everyday life.

--Wallace Chappell

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry project is to present a detailed and definitive statement regarding the nature and purpose of liturgical art. A three-fold approach has been devised in order to achieve this stated goal. First, the larger context in which liturgical art stands needs to be identified and explored. Chapter 1 of this project offers a five-part definition of art which incorporates the major issues and concerns found in art theory. The work of Suzanne Langer and other art theorists is given special attention.

Secondly, Chapter 2 offers a definition of liturgical art proper. This project is motivated by the conviction that liturgical art is its own unique subdiscipline, the lively offspring of a creative union between artistic endeavor and Christian worship. The work of various Christian educators concerned with the meaning and value of the aesthetic for Christian life has been particularly helpful in the creation of this chapter.

Thirdly, Chapter 3 details a certain liturgical art endeavor from start to finish. This endeavor, chronicled by means of journal entries and pictures, illustrates both the context and definition found in Chapters 1 and 2, and represents a particular attempt at integrating theory and practice in the field. It spanned an entire liturgical

season (Lent), consisted mostly of textile art work (i.e., banners and a three-dimensional fabric collage), and culminated in that very elaborate and ancient Church tradition known as the Easter Vigil. A reader interested in the combination of fabric, graphic design, and various types of lettering will find this chapter fascinating. Samples of weekly Lenten meditation sheets which were an integral part of this artistic endeavor are also included. This Doctor of Ministry project concludes with some final reflections regarding the development of an appropriate theology of the arts.

PREFACE

This Doctor of Ministry project has been almost ten years in the making. Its beginnings can be traced back to the Fall of 1973 when I entered the School of Theology at Claremont. I was interested in exploring the possibilities of ministry, and I was already committed, heart and soul, to the arts. These two interests were to run on separate but parallel tracks for nearly two and a half years before they began to intersect. I found myself attending seminary by day and pursuing various artistic endeavors in my free time at night. This separation did not bother me at the time because I had no sense that the two belonged together. Eventually, new discoveries within these parallel ventures of art and ministry were to forge a connection between the two. One discovery involved a new artistic medium. A second discovery grew out of a class on Church history.

I had arrived at seminary with a special interest in textiles. Through the local Parks and Recreation crafts program, I was introduced to the medium known as batik. Batik is a wax-resist technique involving fabric and dyes. I had a wonderful teacher named Dee Cole and soon batik and other related dye-techniques became a new passion of mine. Furthermore, in one of my earliest Church history classes I was introduced for the first time to the

Church's tradition of vestments, paraments, banners, and symbols. My intrigue with this tradition led to special research which culminated in the development of an extensive slide library of liturgical fabric art which I continue to find helpful in my work.

This separate but parallel grounding in the "how-to" and Christian heritage of textile art finally converged during the 1976 Lenten season. I was working then as Assistant Pastor at the Temple City Christian Church, Temple City, California. After previewing some Lenten worship bulletins that portrayed various Christian crosses, I rather spontaneously decided that my high-school youth group should create a series of seven banners, one for each Sunday in Lent and one for Easter Sunday. As a group, we had already created together one cut-and-sew banner out of felt fabric. I was convinced that we were ready for a bigger project. Batik, I reasoned, was something the group could handle. In spite of this being a rather grand leap of faith, the 1976 Lenten banner project was an incredible success. It still amazes me what this group of amateurs (including myself) managed to do. We created seven large banners which were beautiful and artistically sound. We also managed to involve the the entire congregation in the process as it unfolded. Each week, a new banner was created and hung. The entire Sunday morning worship service then centered around the

theme portrayed in the banner for that day. The response was tremendous. Indeed, the Temple City congregation continues to treasure and regularly display those seven banners. They were a high point in our life together. From that time on, I realized that I had a new calling. Interpreting and facilitating the use of art and the artistic process became an important part of my ministry.

In the six years since the creation of those first batik banners, I have had a variety of other successes. For example, I have continued to explore and to create different types of banners for use in worship and other gatherings in the Church. (At Temple City alone, two other banner series were completed--one for Advent and one for Pentecost.) I have also experimented extensively with the use of other art forms in worship, such as drama, puppetry, music, and multimedia techniques. I have taught batik and lectured on liturgical art in a number of settings.

At the seminary, I continued my study of Christian symbolism, theology, the history of art in the Church, and the structure, meaning, and history of Christian worship. A study of art theory began in earnest three years ago. Last year, I was invited to serve as artistic director for Christ Church Parish, Ontario, California, during the 1981 Lenten/Easter season. This artistic venture, by far the most exciting in my ministry to date, presented me with still another opportunity for pounding planks and nails

into the bridge that I have been building between the arts and ministry. The Christ Church experience represented a culmination of almost ten years of experience and study. I was able to more thoroughly integrate my field work in textile art with the historical, theoretical, and theological reflection of my academic career. Indeed, I have discovered a new subdiscipline at the intersection of the two, liturgical art.

PROLOGUE

Simply put, the purpose of this Doctor of Ministry project is to present an in-depth, definitive statement regarding the nature and purpose of liturgical art. It is not my intention to attempt an all-inclusive statement about art, but rather to focus my attention on the intersection of art with the center of Christian life which is liturgy or worship. My firm conviction is that liturgical art is a legitimate subdiscipline of art, and almost ten years of parish and classroom experience has confirmed this.

A threefold approach has been devised to achieve this stated purpose. First, the larger context in which liturgical art stands will be identified and explored. The first chapter of the project will attempt to present a concise working definition of art on which a theory of liturgical art can also be based. The reader will find it helpful to know that this definition grows out of personal practice. Serious study of art theory on my part was originally motivated by a desire to understand and articulate discoveries I was making in the field. The theory shared in this chapter gives voice to my own artistic experience.

Secondly, the second chapter of this project will attempt to define liturgical art as a distinctive subdiscipline which fulfills in unique fashion the general

definition of art. This second task has been somewhat difficult due to a lack of major resources in the field. Most written work on liturgical art either addresses the practical issues (i.e., how to make a banner), or it offers an historical overview (i.e., the history of vestments in the Church). There has been almost no theorizing about liturgical art as a legitimate subdiscipline, or area of study. Furthermore, most work in the area of the theology of art is twenty years old or older. Paul Tillich, Nicolas Berdyaev, and Jacques Maritain were some of the last brave souls to do any major writing in this area. Their work will be reviewed briefly in the closing statement. There are remarkable publications, such as Liturgical Arts, which have also attempted to bridge the gap between theology and art. However, many of these publications are no longer operative. Only recently have some Christian educators begun to study again the meaning and value of the aesthetic for Christian life. I am indebted to many of them for some of my ideas, and they will be considered in Chapter 2.

Thirdly, an actual liturgical art endeavor will be presented in word and picture. Using my 1981 Christ Church experience as a starting point, the third chapter will attempt to illustrate both the context and definition found in Chapters 1 and 2. In addition, there are always discoveries made along the way that are unique to a particular

artistic event. Sharing one such event as it unfolded is one way to present these types of insights into the nature of artistry as it relates to liturgy, as well as to illustrate Chapters 1 and 2.

A closing statement has also been added to this project. It is intended as an artistic confession of faith, and a parting thought regarding the development of a theology of art.

Finally, mention needs to be made regarding the use of inclusive language in this project. Throughout this paper, I have been compelled to use the phrase artist or liturgical artist. A corresponding pronoun has thus been necessary. Rather than alternate between the use of he or she as a means of indicating that no gender is implied, a decision was made to use the pronoun she. The liturgical artist most closely involved with this project was a she, and therefore this pronoun seemed more appropriate. The writer, of course, recognizes that liturgical artists come in all shapes and genders, and this fact is acknowledged in part by the use of quotes that contain masculine gender.

Chapter 1

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF ART

Liturgical art is a subdiscipline or specialty under the general heading of art. This is one of the basic operating assumptions underlying this Doctor of Ministry project. Therefore, any discussion of liturgical art must be preceded by a discussion of art, for this is the context in which liturgical art stands. This chapter is not intended to be an all-encompassing definition of art, but rather an overview of the major problems and categories found in art theory. Such an overview will lay the groundwork for the discussion of liturgical art which follows. The five major headings of this chapter will become the basis of Chapter 2.

ART AS SYMBOL

Any discussion of art must be grounded in an understanding of symbol. Suzanne Langer's classic book, Philosophy in a New Key, offers us a good starting point for this understanding. In an opening chapter on the nature of humankind and humankind's relationship to the animal kingdom, Langer discusses the fact that humanity seems to have a certain primary need which no other creature appears to have. This primary need is the moving force behind all of humanity's unzoological aims, wistful fancies, consciousness of

value, impractical enthusiasms, and sense of the greater dimension to reality called the Divine.¹ This basic need, says Langer, is the need of symbolization. The creation of symbols seems to be as primary as eating, sleeping, or moving about. Symbolization is the fundamental process of the human mind, and it goes on all the time.²

Langer then goes on to explain with considerable care and detail how the material furnished by the senses is constantly wrought into symbols which are our elementary ideas. From this rather lengthy discussion comes the following statement:

Symbolization is pre-rational, but not pre-rational. It is the starting point of all intellection in the human sense, and is more general than thinking, fancying, or taking action. For the brain is not merely a great transmitter, a super switchboard; it is better likened to a great transformer. The current of experience that passes through it undergoes a change of character, not through the agency of the sense by which the perception entered, but by virtue of a primary use which is made of it immediately; it is sucked into the stream of symbols which constitutes a human mind. . . .³

In other words, the very fact that the human brain is constantly involved in the process of symbolic transformation means that it becomes a veritable fountain of more or less spontaneous ideas. All data drawn from experience are registered and tend to terminate in action. This type of

¹Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York: Penguin Books, 1948), p. 32.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 33.

activity; this so-called "sheer expression of ideas, is one that other living creatures seem not to need. Indeed, this theory accounts for those very human traits which are not held in common with other animals. An understanding of symbolic transformation offers insight into ritual laughter, weeping, speech, superstition, and scientific genius.⁴

Further, in her discussion (Chapter 5), Langer makes still another important distinction. Speech, she says, is the natural outcome of only one kind of symbolic process, while ritual is another. These two types of conception--verbal and nonverbal--both spring from the same basic human act of symbolic transformation and both are of equal importance.

Words are certainly our most important instruments of expression, our most characteristic, universal, and enviable tools in the conduct of life. Speech is the mark of humanity. It is the normal terminus of thought. We are apt to be so impressed with its symbolistic mission that we regard it as the only important expressive act, and assume that all other activity must be practical in an animalian way, or else irrational--playful, or atavistic (residual) past recognition, or mistaken, i.e., unsuccessful. But in fact, speech is the natural outcome of only one kind of symbolic process. There are transformations of experience in the human mind that have quite different overt endings. They end in acts that are neither practical nor communicative, though they may be both effective and communal; I mean the actions we call ritual.⁵

Myth is the next important stage in symbolization,

⁴Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁵Ibid., p. 36.

but it does not spring directly from either ritual or speech. Langer is not sure just where myth-making begins in the evolution of human thought. However, she links its beginning with the recognition of realistic significance in a story.⁶ Myth-making is the primitive phase of metaphysical thought, the first embodiment of general ideas. It is related to the fairytale (which is grounded in wishful thinking according to Langer). Myth, however, presents a world picture or an insight into life-in-general. The epic poets, adds Langer, played a very important role in the history of myth because they saved the great mythologies from the overgrowth of mystic fable and the corruption of popular tradition.⁷ However, Langer disagrees with those who believe that mythology is essentially the work of epic poets. The mythological work of these creative bards was only a metamorphosis of world-old and universal ideas.⁸ Furthermore, Langer asserts that epic represents a more advanced form of symbolization. It was capable of expressing meanings and ideas that had had no vehicle of expression before. With the advent of epic, artistry began. Epic was the first flower, or one of the first flowers, of a new symbolic mode known as art.⁹

It is at this stage in her book that Langer's discussion of symbol evolves into a discussion of art which

⁷Ibid., p. 160. ⁸Ibid., p. 161. ⁹Ibid., p. 165.

is exactly her point. Symbol, she asserts, is the ground of art. Of course, the next logical questions are: "Why has symbol become art?" or "What distinguishes art from other forms of symbolization?" These important questions will be dealt with in another section. At this stage, however, the point which needs to be made clear is that symbol is the crucial and basic element in art. Symbols are built from and give expression to human experience. Symbols are the vehicles by which we conceptualize and dialogue with the world.

ART AS THE WORK OF A PERSON OF COURAGE

Over and over again in my experience and in my reading, the concept of art as the work of a person of courage has arisen. Roger Hazelton's book, A Theological Approach to Art, contains a chapter entitled "Art as Vocation," which offers a good starting point for my discussion of this matter. "Vocation," says Hazelton, "means being 'called' to a particular work. . . . True vocation means that doing and being are one in a person's relationship to their work."¹⁰ Characteristically, art is neither job nor task but true vocation. Artistry always seems to claim the artist in a personally engrossing, wholly committed fashion. Being

¹⁰ Roger Hazelton, A Theological Approach to Art (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 92.

called to artistry, however, is never an end in itself. It is the beginning of something far more significant, the unending artistic struggle. This is so because the significance of any vocation, or "calling," is made clear by the fundamental loyalty that motivates it. The artist is motivated by a sincere love for life and the world and a profound desire to come to grips with them. In attempting to probe the depth and breadth of things given, the artist is never content with obvious, merely surface appearances. The Robert Frost line--"I had a lover's quarrel with the world"¹¹--is most appropriate here. Art makes the distinction and knows the difference between appearance and reality, and attempts to express it. This artistic struggle has a poignant urgency about it, for the quarrel is always that of a lover, never a stranger or enemy. Artistic struggle always takes place within a basic covenanted faithfulness. It reflects a deep resolve to harken to what the world is really saying. Put in still other terms, artistry is never just a matter of painting pictures or writing poetry. The artist is an individual wholly discontent with things superficially perceived. Such total discontent is the beginning of an initiative which becomes creative as it matures. Such discontent is the starting

¹¹Robert Frost, "The Lesson for Today," The New Pocket Anthology of American Verse, ed. Oscar Williams (Cleveland: World, 1955), p. 247.

point of a search for truth.

Now phrases such as a poignant urgency or wholly discontent also suggest the existence of a certain ambivalence in regard to one's calling as an artist. To choose or accept art as a vocation is a commitment to wrestle with reality. Such a choice is a courageous act. The story of Jacob wrestling with the angel could easily be the story of an artist involved and struggling with the world. As Robert Raines put it:

Jacob was named and lamed. You and I will be given a new name, a new identity, if we struggle to the dawn-death, and a scar to remember it by. No naming without a laming. God scars those he names with some mark of meaning. . . .¹²

Ben Shahn, an artist himself, describes this so-called wrestling match in the following way:

It is only within the context of real life that an artist is forced to make choices. And it is only against a background of hard reality that choices count, that they affect a life, and carry with them that degree of belief and dedication and, I think I can say, spiritual energy that is the primary force in art. . . . For it is through such conflicts that his values become sharpened; perhaps it is only through such conflicts that he comes to know himself at all.¹³

This commitment to wrestle is marked by a courageous willingness to give away part of oneself. Artists, like

¹²Robert Raines, Living the Questions (Waco: TX: 1976), p. 32.

¹³Ben Shahn, The Shape of Content (New York: Vintage Press, 1957), p. 13.

lovers or mystics, allow others to exist through them. The artist offers her life, skill, blood, sweat, and tears on behalf of a new creation. This is perhaps what we should expect when we ponder the fact that a work of creation is ultimately a work of love. Love is the most ruthless of all passions, sparing neither itself nor its object, nor the obstacles in its way. A truly courageous creator never counts the cost, but engages in the task of enabling something unique and autonomous to exist through her.

Courageous struggle, then, is the process by which artists perceive the depth in reality and incarnate the meaning found there. This struggle is an aspect of all creative processes and the particular form it takes depends a great deal on the conception of the particular artist and the medium used for expression. This struggle to move beyond generalized expressions of ordinary perception and ordinary language to a new creation, creates the depth that one senses in any artistic work of merit. This struggle, this give-and-take wrestling match, points us now toward a definition of art.

ART AS COMMUNICATION

It is time to offer a concise definition of art. It seemed essential to present first the two elements that underlie such a definition. The preceding discussion on symbol and the artist as a person of courage offers a

springboard. Art can now be described as the perfected symbolization of the artistic wrestling match, or the incarnate response to the long-sought vision of reality. Having offered these two possible definitions, it is now possible to answer the two questions posed on page 8.

How does symbol become art? Simply put, symbol becomes art through a process of embodiment. There is an objective reality to art that distinguishes it from other symbols and allows it to stand autonomously. With Langer's description of symbolization as the means of conceptualizing reality firmly in mind, I turn to these statements by David Harned:

Art is not exotica; some rare flower that mysteriously appears in the middle of a vegetable garden. It inevitably develops from the character of the human situation. The fundamental aspect of that situation is simply that experience is confused and needs to be sorted out. We accomplish this through out aesthetic activity, which is no less important if we are to adapt to the world than is technology if we are to adapt the world to our purposes. We discover the world through creative acts. Only in the course of some expressive act do we grasp the exact nature of whatever it is that we are struggling to express.¹⁴

. . . Only when our attempts at expression reach the incarnate stage we call art do they prove entirely satisfying.¹⁵

In other words, life is a fast-moving affair. Ideas, visions, and experiences are everywhere and often

¹⁴David Baily Harned, Theology and the Arts (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 45.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 31.

pass without consideration. An artist captures a moment or moments of experience in order to draw out their meaning and invite reflection. Through the arts, we are offered tangents of life that might otherwise be lost. We are offered connections and relationships we missed. The artist stops time (or reorganizes time in re-presentation) in order to give us time for consideration. Poems, paintings, sculptures, plays, and other art forms ultimately function as so many closed packages of clues which are both portable and lasting. They have durability infinitely superior to that of our personal experiences, for the coherence of their parts is firmer and more effectively organized.¹⁶ Art is a frame which isolates and combines our scattered life's experiences into meaning.

The preceding discussion intersects with earlier reflections by Langer on "epic" as the first flower or mode of art. "Epic" (the embodiment of mythology in poetic form) is the next step beyond myth due to the fact that it incarnates the life-in-general in more transcendent form. "Epic" captures the interconnectedness of human life and cosmic order in a complete, perfected, and final sense.¹⁷

At this point Langer's work encourages us to take

¹⁶Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, Meaning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 87.

¹⁷Langer, pp. 163-164.

the discussion still further. She is interested in probing what it is that art can communicate as well as clarifying that art is a form of communication. This brings us to the second question: What distinguishes art from other types of symbolization? The simplest and most concise way to answer this question is to declare that art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling.¹⁸ By such feeling, a work of art is distinguished from anything else in the world. By such feeling, a utilitarian object may also be a work of art. By such feeling, an art piece may be considered bad by failing in its purpose.

Feeling, however, does not mean specific emotions. Indeed, it is a well known fact that some musical forms seem to bear a sad and a happy interpretation equally well. This apparently paradoxical fact bears out the right-mindedness of those who recoil from the concept of art as an admission of specific feeling. Instead, art has to do with that which lies under specific feeling--the morphology or total structure of feeling.

Common sense has for thousands of years associated art with human feeling, and modern students have devised an impressive variety of aesthetic systems designed to make this intuition into a fact. Mrs. Langer's own approach is to argue that what art gives us is not direct feeling, but the characteristic forms and patterns of feeling projected into and

¹⁸Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 40.

through a given medium like music or sculpture or dance.¹⁹

In other words, there is always the possibility that something will emerge from the arrangement of tones or colors in a particular work of art that was not there before. This something is a new structure of sentience, a new formulation of feeling. When a work of art is encountered one senses that one is meeting the truth in a new way. This truth, of course, is not a simple or a single kind. On the contrary, good art leaves the way open for exploring the rich complexity and fecundity of human feeling. Art has a unique capacity for symbolizing that which is always many-faceted and as confusingly diverse as the texture of experience itself.

There is still another way one can approach this second question. Art can be distinguished from other forms of symbolization by a certain dialogical quality. This is so because artistry "is not only a making, but a showing forth which claims some sort of response."²⁰

The assertion can be illustrated in two ways. First, dialogue is seen in the artistic process itself. For example, it can be said that a painter always paints an object in order to see it. Painting is never an activity

¹⁹ Scott Cochrane and Jack Coogan, "The Function of Art," Theolog, School of Theology at Claremont, 23:17 (September 20, 1979).

²⁰ Hazelton, pp. 36-37.

undertaken after the experience that inspired it is a thing of the past. Instead, it is directly related to the fulfillment of the experience itself. For the painter, artistry is a vital step in the process of seeing well. The same holds true for the writer or the dancer, even though the medium of expression changes. In other words, artistic expression is an on-going process by which human beings discover the world. Only in the course of some expressive act do we grasp the exact nature of whatever it is we are struggling to express. In addition, true dialogue involves give-and-take, loss and gain, and art as dialogus is not exempted from this. Always there is a loss of intensity and immediacy in the original creative situation that launched a work of art into being.

Once the story has been told, the picture painted, or the music composed, the artist's ardor has cooled, his energies have been channeled. But there is also gain: in "bringing words to heal" or "making something out of nothing," the artist has been able to bring his or her private vision up to the threshold of another's consciousness and so to open communicable future with that other.²¹

Dialogue is not only part of the artistic process but also part of the receiver's experience. There is a sense in which most of us tend to resist getting acquainted with the depths of existence. The artist helps us both with our resistance and our tendency to see only what we have seen before. Just as a child plays with light through

²¹Ibid., pp. 37-38.

a prism, so we can focus and refract any aspect of the human experience through the artistic mode. The artist may want us to stop and look at an old familiar object; to jog our memory a bit in regard to the life we already know. In contrast, the artist may present us with new and unconsidered relationships. Imagination is thus sparked and our awareness of reality is extended beyond our personal vision of things.²²

It is not the goal of art to produce the object it means to represent. Polanyi suggests that even in the era of European realism (Pericles to Byzantine period and Giotto to end of nineteenth century), the paintings that most closely resembled the object under scrutiny were not considered the best.²³

In other words, the goal of a "flower" painter is not to produce a "flower," but to express something meaningful about it. In the same way, the artist who undertakes to explore a certain human emotion intends to engage an audience in exploring the emotion, not evoke it. In truth, emotion and strong feelings may be provoked, but always a certain distance of objectivity must be maintained. As the French neoclassical critic Quatremere de Quincy once remarked:

²²Linda Inlow, "The Best Thing to Liturgize Is Life," Claremont, School of Theology (unpublished paper), Fall 1979, p. 3.

²³Polanyi and Prosch, p. 89.

When a painter packs a vast expanse into a narrow space, when he leads me across the depths of the infinite on a flat surface, and makes the air circulate . . . , I love to abandon myself to his illusions, but I want the frame to be there. I want to know that what I see is actually nothing but a canvas or a simple plane.²⁴

It is when we lose this distance that we are participating in "delusion" rather than reflecting on reality through "illusion." However, when a work of art maintains the separation and creates a dialogue between the viewer and the artist in regard to reality, all kinds of possibilities are inherent in the conversation. By means of images thrown up alongside the real, what is real is enabled to speak to us and to take shape in us. Indeed, the fashioning and using of symbols to express reality are humanly necessary if the real is going to have its impact on us at all.²⁵ In other words, a description of artistry as dialectic or dialogue indicates both the process and justification of the arts.

ART AS PLAYFULNESS

Both art (in this case, the finished creation) and artistry (the process of creation) are a form of playfulness. Like all forms of playfulness, neither is essential for human survival. At least, they are not essential in the same way that food, clothing, and shelter are

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Langer, Feeling and Form, pp. 19-20.

essential. Neither of them will stop hunger pangs, keep out drafts, or hold up walls. Both are unique because they do not have to exist. Art and artistry, like all forms of playfulness, are analogous to the marble statue in the garden. They are totally extra. Their supplemental character makes them special.

To declare the creative enterprise nonessential, however, is not to proclaim it trivial or unimportant. On the contrary, art and artistry perform several significant functions. They are far more important than mere decoration.

First, art and artistry, like all forms of playfulness, help to activate the human imagination. The creative enterprise offers us a means of crossing over old boundaries of perception. Exposure to previously unknown or unacknowledged aspects of reality is made possible. We dabble with paint, or we study a painting, and both serve to expand our horizons.

Secondly, art and artistry, like all forms of playfulness, function in such a way as to call forth a certain intensity from within us. Both are able to claim our complete and undivided attention as listener, reader, spectator, or participant. We are enabled to abandon ourselves totally to the immediate task of exploration. We find ourselves approaching art or artistry with an all-embracing spirit because we believe there is nothing to lose and

everything to gain. Giving ourselves temporarily over to this kind of intensity is one of the ways we learn. Learning occurs when all-encompassing intensity leads to a new definition of boundaries and limitations.

Thirdly, art and artistry, like all forms of playfulness, function as a kind of psychodrama which allows the artist or the receiver to act out the forthcoming future. For instance, it is not an accident that Shakespeare's character Hamlet uses a play to clarify for himself the events occurring around him. The play enables him to put together the bits and pieces of reality that have eluded him up to that point. He participates in an integration of the past and thus moves into the future. Very often we discern where we are going by first rehearsing all the alternatives.

Fourthly, the linking of playfulness with the arts testifies to the fact that humanity is made not only for duty but also for delight. The artist does not view life as a problem to be solved, but as a gift to be enjoyed. Precisely because the arts resist functionalization their continued presence and encouragement in our society become of paramount importance. In the words of Harned:

We live in a utilitarian age and tend to equate the value of things with their usefulness. The family that prays together, so our pragmatic evangelical spirits tell us, stays together. But every rigidly utilitarian perspective is vicious. It fosters a kind of seriousness that blinds us to the humanizing power

of much that has no importance at all for the satisfaction of biological needs. So our lives are robbed of a certain element of spontaneity and style.²⁶

This statement points toward the gratuitous function of art and artistry.

Harned's statement leads into a discussion of still another significant function of art and artistry as playfulness. Art and artistry can be defined as celebration. "Ex opere operato," claims Hazelton, "by virtue of the work being worked, art is an act of celebrating life. . . ."²⁷ Celebration is bound up with the very idea of art and its execution, just as it is tied, perhaps more obviously, with the publication, performance, or exhibition which follows. Art is celebration by the mere fact that it singles out and lifts up some aspect of reality; some structure of feeling that has durable and sharable worth. Art is never just a serious attempt to disclose the reality the artist is attempting to "see." It is also an attempt to dance about with what is perceived. All art has a quality of joy to it. Even modern art, which has been criticized for being so negative is celebrative in that it finds something worth articulating.

The faithful rendering of the stuff of contemporary experience carries with it a strange and unexpected victory. To express meaninglessness through art is to discover and declare that all is not meaningless. . . .²⁸

²⁶Harned, pp. 23-24.

²⁷Hazelton, pp. 132-133.

²⁸Ibid., p. 152.

All art, even modern art, represents a triumph, a victory, an "in spite of." We should be ready to see and appreciate this celebration wherever it is found. This usually means putting aside our stereotypes and our prejudices. Every age tends to judge contemporary art harshly. Criticism runs the gamut of depressing, unintelligible, or unartistic.

A line from W. H. Auden's Christmas Oratorio might be helpful at this point: "The spirit must practice its scales of rejoicing." As Hazelton has written, "The image this line evokes in my mind is that of a reluctant child sitting down before the piano to do his finger exercises, making a matter of duty out of what is in truth the rendering of delight."²⁹ Hazelton then goes on to make the point that Auden is hinting that rejoicing does not always come easily. Rejoicing must be learned and practiced on a daily basis. Joy is not necessarily a presently felt emotion. It is very often imperfectly grasped, and sometimes lost sight of altogether. However, joy can be the goal of personal and cultural existence. It can determine the course of our direction, and it truly becomes more real as we move purposely and patiently toward it. In the arts today, this element of promise rather than possession seems to predominate, and yet this does not mean that joy is utterly absent or without effect. The arts of our day reflect this practice of rejoicing in a most determined and enlivening way.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 132-133.

³⁰ Ibid.

Given the importance of these functions of art and artistry, it is possible to use them as criteria in doing an evaluation of art. Good art always involves some authentic playfulness. If one removes this as an underlying motive, art is nothing more than a technique, a trap-making process by which we are asked to admire the virtuosity of artistic technique alone. Such art fails to move beyond a two-dimensional or decorative stage. It does not produce intense meditative concentration in its observer. In Art and Theological Imagination, the author, John W. Dixon, takes time to analyze a bad piece of art (Couture's Romans of the Decadence) for the sake of understand how such a piece happened.

Superficially, the painting looks superior. The space is (in contrast to Giotto's work) more intricate and under better control. The figures move more fluently with a vastly greater variety of pace and action. Technically, it is an accomplished work. What then is wrong with it? The most concise way to put it is in one word: discontinuity. By now everything that was a joyful discovery for Giotto is a technical trick. Every aspect of Giotto's work emerges from the story and returns to it to illuminate its human significance. For Couture, everything exists for its own sake alone. Even the story is a blatantly obvious and altogether contrived device: the statues of the ancient Romans are frowning with stern disapproval of their depraved descendants.³¹

In other words, Dixon criticizes Couture for being a "con-artist." He is inauthentic. He is not celebrating nor communicating anything of depth. Instead, his calculating

³¹John W. Dixon, Art and the Theological Imagination (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), p. 117.

intelligence intrudes into the artistic process, seeking to control it rather than serve it.

In contrast, Hazelton cites an example of good art that is authentically playful--the chapel of the Rosary in Vence, France. It was designed wholly by Henri Matisse, who created not only the form and decoration of the building, but also all the furnishings and vestments used in worship. Light and color are the themes. The chapel has a white floor, ceiling, and walls. These reflect the bright colors of the high narrow windows, done in stained glass. Matisse's overall motif in these windows is the tree of life, which he interprets playfully in a variety of intense colors and different shapes. Visitors are irresistibly drawn to the vibrant, celebrative room. After visiting or carefully studying pictures, one concludes that although it may not look like a traditional church, Vence is a better manifestation of the Church for that very reason. The Chapel of the Rosary offers a new and greatly needed dimension to contemporary Christian worship and witness. Faith is released in a truly playful fashion instead of being confined by older, tamer structures.³²

ART AS HISTORIC MOMENT

All art has an historical dimension. Every piece

³²Hazelton, p. 139.

of art is to some degree time bound in that it springs forth from a certain place in a certain era. Good or authentic art, of course, transcends its own age to speak to others, but if a creation does not reflect its own historical connection, it is no longer art. One does not paint a Raphael in the twentieth century. Always "art's intent is to declare just how things really are with us by devising a breakthrough which makes possible a sharing of experience without diminution or distortion,"³³ but every such declaration also belongs to a particular world made up of particular images, feelings, and myths that were preexistent when the artist began his or her creating.

There is, of course, such a thing as tradition in the arts. In other words, ways of perceiving and working with a particular medium are handed down. Not everything has to be learned all over again. Artists go to school or work under a number of teachers in order to become acquainted with various styles already formed. Part of this process also includes finding models or affinities.

However, the artist remains basically a technician until something more happens. She eventually finds that there are conventions, stylistic options, and expressive

³³Ibid., p. 17.

patterns which she must come to grips with. This "coming to terms" with past forms is part of the artistic process. It is a matter of "dialoguing" with the past in order to make something new. Every creative act means that something has been discarded; something that does not need saying now or has been better said before. Indeed, creativity should never be confused with utter novelty. Creativity is the result of the interaction between old and new forms, individual stirrings and cultural patterns, freedom and tradition.³⁴

Dorothy Sayers makes the same point in her marvelous book, The Mind of the Maker. In a chapter entitled "Pentecost," she reflects on a certain passage out of one of her books:

It is interesting to rake into one's own mind and discover, if one can, what were the combined sources of power on which one, consciously or unconsciously, drew while endeavoring to express an idea in writing. Here, for instance, is a whole string of passages which were obviously hovering about in my memory when I wrote a phrase in the Nine Tailors. . . .³⁵

Sayers then lists nine different selections from such sources as the Book of Job, Milton, Keats, and Browning. She concludes in the following manner:

But what is important and not always understood in these days, is that a reminiscent passage of this

³⁴Ibid., pp. 60-61.

³⁵Dorothy L. Sayers, Mind of the Maker (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1941), pp. 118-120.

kind is intended to recall to the reader all the associated passages and so put him in touch with the sources of power behind and beyond the writer. The demand for "originality"--with the implication that the reminiscence of other writers is a sin against originality and a defect in the work--is a recent one and would have seemed ludicrous to the poets of the Augustan Age, or of Shakespeare's time. The traditional view is that each new work should be a fresh focus of power through which former streams of beauty, emotion, and reflection are directed.³⁶

The history of art, then, is in part the history of creative grappling with previous "form and feeling" in order to present them anew for the current age. This body of testimony to the human condition cannot be ignored. This rich heritage of affirmations and negations concerning reality can hardly be discounted. To do so is to run the risk of irrelevance. The creations of an artist who fails to grapple with the tradition reflect either ignorance, pretension, artificiality, or silliness. As John Dixon remarked in discussing the failure of Couture:

The problem with Couture and his colleagues is that they could not take their place in the true unfolding of imagination, but were captured by the publicly reigning ideas of the day. They took only the technique from the artistic tradition, the general themes that were now worn out.³⁷

In other words, they failed to create anew for their particular age and thus they could not possibly transcend the bounds of it and speak to others. Sayers summarizes it this way:

³⁶Ibid., pp. 120-121. ³⁷Dixon, p. 125.

If the author either consciously or unconsciously tries to incarnate himself as something other than what he is, there is a falseness in the artistic expression. . . . This, in Art, is the unalterable law of kind, from which the artist can by no means escape; the truth of what he says about himself is tested by the truth of the form in which he says it. By its truth—not by its elegance or accomplishment, though the more accomplished the form the more readily it will betray its own lack of truth. . . .³⁸

For this reason, all incarnations of an artist should be subjected to the severest examination. It is right that artistry should be pulled about and subjected to the most searching kind of inquiry. If a creation is truly sound, it will stand firm, and prove its truth by its toughness. Those who stand back in unstudied reverence do the arts little honor. Indeed, such piety may reveal a fear that the structure of feeling portrayed in the art work is too flimsy, or even possibly false. Reverence for art includes rough handling.

If all art has a necessary historical element subject to scrutiny by those who follow, then it is important to read and study people like Andre Malraux and John Dixon who are interested in chronicling this evolving process--this unfolding of the artistic imagination. The work of thoughtful art historians is important for two reasons, the first being that it informs us about the nature of the human enterprise. Every age of art--every artistic style that grows into existence--reveals something about who humankind

³⁸Sayers, pp. 91-92.

is and who or what it believes to be ultimate. The "art of our age" is not inherently better than any other age-- it is just another example of concentrated human energy grappling with the real. As Dixon himself says:

Artistic styles are not simply convenient diversions for the work of the art historians. They are explorations of modes of being human. There is no question now of "true" or "false"; they are here, to be known, because they are possibilities of ourselves. A style is an essay in human psychology. A style is a manifestation of one of the possibilities within the manner of the earth.³⁹

Malraux and Dixon both believe there is development in art, but this has nothing to do with an inevitable historical process or a progressive movement toward superior form. However, they both see an intelligible and connected change in art which can serve as a resource for human development as well as a revelation of human development.

This brings us to the second reason for being interested in the writings of people like Malraux and Dixon. It is my firm belief now (already alluded to many times) that the human enterprise is shaped by the human process of symbolization. As Langer continually points out, the symbols human beings develop "create" the world we know. Symbols bring something out of nothing; order out of chaos. They fashion our impressions into intelligible forms; they end up shaping our experience. The creative urge is not

³⁹Dixon, p. 40.

only related to the desire to adorn life, but also to the struggle to preserve it. Art has consequences for ordinary life. Without art, there would be no ordinary life.⁴⁰

Furthermore, art historians would assert that there are crucial discoveries in the symbolization process that have on numerous occasions in human history brought about radical changes in the way life was perceived. These epoch-making changes (i.e., the introduction of "story" into art or the birth of the "soul" [see Dixon]) transformed the way humankind perceived reality. Life before and after such changes was radically different. Every artistic moment thus becomes a reconstituting of the world as we refer to it. The history of art is the history of human reality being transformed. Every artistic style must be considered from the perspective of having helped transform the world-view of its time. Indeed,

It is the artist who is the creator of culture. His work shapes our feelings, our loyalties, our goals. . . . Artists grind the lenses through which society will look to understand man's nature and possibilities. . . .⁴¹

It is art that reveals the values of our society, and the definitive factors which are really at work below the surface. Very often, we are unable to grasp such values and factors, or we have chosen to put on blinders. Artists therefore become the shapers of society by being

⁴⁰Harned, p. 27.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 40-41.

culture's critics. Artists bring a resisting society to a critical awareness of its true nature. In addition, life never stands still. Always there are new threats and new opportunities. The artist can serve us by acquainting us with change. We are thus enabled to respond to new challenges instead of confusing them with old opportunities long familiar. The artist is midwife to the birth of new options that become effective forces in the process of culture.⁴² This point is powerfully illustrated in the following statement which uses poetry as illustration.

Once a poem is assimilated individually or culturally, its readers get the impression that its object imitates meanings and values with which they have been more or less well-acquainted all along. But this is an illusion. For the values and meanings of a culture are never known, or never known clearly, or never known in their full density and specificity by those who participate in the culture until the poem reveals them. . . .⁴³

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Eliseo Vivas, Creation and Discovery (Noonday Press, 1955), p. 269, quoted by Harned, p. 41.

Chapter 2

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF LITURGICAL ART

In the preceding chapter, five descriptive categories were formulated and then employed in a brief presentation of the major problems found in art theory. An underlying assumption of this project is that liturgical art is a full-fledged subdiscipline or specialty under the general heading of art. Therefore, liturgical art should also fit and fulfill these same five categories in a unique fashion.

Liturgical art is an expression of faith. It springs forth from the intersection of professed Christian conviction and artistic endeavor. Faith is the state of wholeheartedly and steadfastly believing in the existence, power, and benevolence of Supreme Being. Art is the incarnate symbolization of the deepest dimensions of reality. Liturgical art as one outgrowth of this intersection attempts to articulate the deepest dimensions of reality through the eyes of Christian faith. In other words, it operates out of a particular structure of meaning and articulates reality in terms of that meaning. The focus of liturgical art is Divine Reality. However, the definition does not conclude here. Liturgical art is more specialized

than is suggested by this general statement. Such classifications as religious or even Christian art, valid though they are, are not specific enough. Liturgical art has a dynamic, functional purpose, a certain aspect of the Christian life that it aims at and participates in. It is any art form, be it dance or song or drama or film or fabric, which is created for and used by a particular worshipping community. "Liturgical art" is an artistic "act of service" on behalf of a particular worshipping community and the God this community affirms. The liturgical artist attempts to offer back to the worshipping community for its own edification, an artistic expression of the faith it affirms.

"Liturgical," of course, comes from the word "liturgy." The Westminster Dictionary of Worship defines liturgy in the following fashion:

In the singular the word "liturgy" denotes an act of worship. . . . Derived from the Greek "leitourgia," it was used in Hellenistic Greek for an act of public service. In the New Testament, it is employed as an act of service, or ministry to God, and finally, since worship was regarded as the supreme service to God it was applied to the eucharist.¹

Another far more poetic definition comes to us from the magazine Liturgical Arts.

The liturgy is the prayer of Christ in His church, and His church is in every Christian. In liturgy,

¹"Liturgies," The Westminster Dictionary of Worship, ed. by J. G. Davies. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 222.

every aspiration, every desire, every work of every Christian is gathered and transformed, his darkness is flooded with light, his secret and formless longing takes shape and becomes visible, his inarticulate praise is audible.²

For those of us of Protestant persuasion, who may or may not participate in weekly communion, it is important to clarify that liturgical art is concerned with liturgy in its broader definition here and not confined just to worship that includes communion. Liturgical art aids and serves the action of any liturgy, whether or not it includes communion. In the words of Houselander, "The liturgical artist clothes man's prayer in beauty. He vests Christ in man for sacrifice. He shows the world its own joys and sorrows when Christ has put them on."³ Furthermore, liturgy always has its own structure, rhythm, and pace. There is a gathering, a building up, a climax, and a descent to dismissal.⁴ Liturgy or worship alternates between the involvement of persons and groups of persons. It moves between the experiences of sound and silence, speech and song, movement and stillness, proclamation and reflection, word and action. Any art form used in this context must never interrupt, replace, or bring the course of the worship

²Caryll Houselander, "The Liturgical Artist and the Worker," Liturgical Arts, 14:3 (May 1946), 57.

³Ibid.

⁴Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, ed. by Bishop's Committee on Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington: Publications Office United States

experience to a halt. For example,

. . . if one uses a film in such a way that one seems to be saying, "We will stop the liturgy for a few moments now in order to experience this art form," then the use is inappropriate.⁵

If an art form is used to enhance, support, and illuminate a part or parts of the liturgical action or the whole, it can be both appropriate and rewarding. It will also have fulfilled its function as liturgical art. Liturgical art, by definition, is not intended to stand alone, although much of it probably could. It is intended to offer liturgy an additional voice. Time and a work's ability to fully incarnate some aspect of the Divine Reality will ultimately decide whether or not it endures. Bach's cantatas are examples of liturgical art that transcended their immediate worship context. The descriptive categories that follow will provide a means of elaborating on this definition of liturgical art.

LITURGICAL ART AS A SYMBOL

The last chapter sought to establish symbol and the process of symbolization as the basis on which humans become human and art begins. It also attempted to clarify the distinction between symbol and art. Art springs from the

Catholic Conference, 1978), pp. 16-17.

⁵Ibid.

process of symbolization. In its capacity to express the structures of feeling it becomes an autonomous creation. Once the creative process has occurred, and a work of art has been fashioned, there is an objective reality to the creation that separates it from the process which gave birth to it. Yes, art is any process that explores, organizes, and communicates the feelings, patterns, and rhythms of life. Art creates "perceptible form"⁶ that makes varieties of experience, particularly nondiscursive experience, incarnate and available for perception. Art gives form to things that are present, but are not articulated as a matter of routine experience. Art presumes that ordinary, everyday language is not the limits of human experience.

The principal service of works of art lies in their compensation for the deficiencies of the linguistic process in clarifying the inner life of man and mapping his world. . . . Some men make the artifacts that we call works of art. They are created for many of the same reasons effective in the development of language. They initiate us more fully into the particularity of things and situations we confront and the emotions we feel. We must have such knowledge, but language alone does not provide it.⁷

It is at this junction that art and religion overlap. Religion is a system of worship and faith. Like art, religion is at home in the region of symbol--that realm in

⁶Larry Thomas, "Liturgy and Experience" (D.Min. Project, School of Theology at Claremont, 1975), p. 93.

⁷David Harned, Theology and the Arts (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 30.

which meanings are not so much stated as they are evoked or illuminated, and in which events are not so much described as they are remembered and celebrated. The deepest dimensions of the religious life either elude ordinary discursive expression or are recognized as not needing expression in this form. Religion as a system of worship and faith is constantly seeking new forms of disclosure. Given art's capacity to fully incarnate the structures of feeling, it is not surprising that the deepest concerns of religion have found expression in artistic form. Phenomena such as ritual, myth, symbols, and sacred places represent raids on the inarticulate. They also exemplify humanity's earliest attempts at artistic embodiment. Although these attempts at artistic expression can never fully grasp or contain the deep mystery that religion calls the Divine, they can function as so-called "icons." Icons are avenues of approach, numinous presences, ways of touching without totally grasping or seizing.⁸ They serve as a check against ethereal spirituality or the Platonic view of the universe which places reality beyond the fabric of our everyday lives. Icons help us disengage from the world of ideas and abstract forms which can be so compelling and all-encompassing. Icons remind us to seek the spirit in the depth of matter. For example, the history of Israel as it comes to us in the

⁸Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, p. 7.

Old Testament is the history of perceived natural icons. Phenomena such as flood, fire, rock, sea, mountain, cloud, and the political situations and the institutions of succeeding generations allowed Israel to indirectly touch the face of God.⁹ A religious people were enabled by means of such so-called icons to discern the Divine in their midst. All art can serve as icon, and liturgical art can serve as icon in worship.

Stated in still another fashion, both art and religion affirm the same basic reality and work toward the same basic goal. Life is seen as a whole with depth and breadth. Life is viewed as more than mere surface containing vast dimensions of feeling and form that need articulation. Life is seen as worthy of being claimed via the process of symbolization. Life, thus incarnated, can be considered in a meaningful way.

Religion and art present a vision, a way of looking at the world. When they present the world in its wholeness, people preserve the vision, pass on the meaning, and weave the experience into the fabric of tradition. Religion and art act in the hope, never fully disappointed, that every age is gifted with people to see and hear what must be seen and heard. Each generation is peopled with those who realize the truth is not obvious and who respond to the intrinsic beauty of life.¹⁰ Life goes on because so few miss the point entirely.¹⁰

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Anthony Padovano, "Aesthetic Experience and Redemptive Grace," in Aesthetic Dimensions of Religious Education, ed. by Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith (New York: Paulist

Christianity has a name for this approach to reality. It is known as a sacramental vision. When it is systematically articulated, it is entitled sacramental theology. A sacramental view of life affirms that the physical, material, and bodily reality has, reflects, and functions as a vehicle for the spiritual dimension, and that the Divine can be revealed through that reality, be it "buildings and bridges and earth and wine, and human flesh."¹¹ To quote Padovano,

Aesthetic experience and sacramental experience deal with the physical world directly but beneath the surface appearance. . . . The artist reveals the glory within an otherwise unexceptional experience. We encounter the formula as charged with mystery. A sacramental world view likewise reveals a world straining to become more than it is. The commonplace actions of washing or breaking bread or anointing gives us a sense of presence and life.¹²

In seeking to articulate the depth and interrelatedness of all reality, art and religion find themselves standing on common ground.

Press, 1979), p. 9.

¹¹Marie Harris, "Word, Sacrament, Prophecy," in Tradition and Transformation in Religious Education, ed. by Padraic O'Hare (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1979), p. 451.

¹²Padovano, p. 3.

LITURGICAL ART AS THE WORK OF A
PERSON OF COURAGE

The liturgical artist is an individual who feels called to an aesthetic vocation amidst the worship life of a particular faith community, namely the Christian community. The liturgical artist is also well steeped, or naturally inclined toward a sacramental vision of reality. Both art and faith exercise authority in her life. Both art and faith call for her submission to a reality larger than herself. This means that the authority of the artist does not reside within so much as it resides in the vision of reality that is perceived. As Padovano has written:

One is captivated by beauty, submits to truth, surrenders to the whole. The artist is the agent, the minister, if you will, through whom another presence is made manifest.¹³

Likewise, faith functions in similar fashion. The authority of faith does not ultimately rest in official structures or institutions but in the message that faith proclaims.

Conversion is the result of an insight into the ultimate, a sense of comprehensive love or truth which exceeds all understanding. The agent who introduces a believer to this more significant experience is a minister, a priest, an artist, if you will.¹⁴

This dual affirmation of art and faith by the liturgical artist is not understood by a great many within

¹³Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid.

the Christian community today. Especially in mainline American Protestant and evangelical churches is such an affirmation a problem. Both have depended largely on a verbal presentation of faith and therefore they are embarrassed, uncomfortable, and bewildered in the presence of nonverbal symbolization of the Divine Reality. When liturgical art is used at all, it is very often thought to carry a "message." It is presumed to function as a package or container which holds a particular truth. Such an understanding of art also assumes that this message is readily pulled out of its context. Those who hold this understanding believe that there is an easy and obvious answer for the often asked question, "What does that piece of art mean?" However, message art is seldom, if ever, genuine art. Art is never about something; it is something.

We do not have to abandon the search for meaning in art to recognize that it is not detachable or removable from the form in which it reaches us. . . . Religious art poses some especially acute problems in this connection. So much of it is so thoroughly insipid, trite, and cloying that it probably should not be termed art at all. When everything is geared for "getting the message" through pictorial instruction or musically induced emotion, should we be astonished if nothing happens either artistically or religiously?¹⁵

In many of these same mainline Protestant or evangelical circles, there is a mistaken notion regarding the

¹⁵Roger Hazelton, A Theological Approach to Art (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 24.

subject matter of Christian or liturgical art. It is assumed that subject matter alone makes a work of art religious. However, this is not the case. The choice of religious themes is never a protection against banality or superficiality, and so-called art that has these characteristics does a great disservice to authentic faith. Instead, the distinguishing mark of good Christian or liturgical art is that it does not banish or ignore all mystery. It does not gloss over the human doubt and anxiety which is a part of all religious searching. In other words, the artist of faith courageously pursues the verities and profundities of genuine faith instead of popular stereotypes or bland distorted formulas of the day.¹⁶

It is the call to this kind of witness that fires and inspires the liturgical artist in her unique endeavor. She is named and lamed in the process of struggling to put before the worshipping community the full range of truth in regard to reality. Her mark of meaning comes in the process of finding significant ways to communicate the depth and breadth of things.

The liturgical artist is also very aware that the vision of a people is the motivating force lying behind any action. There is no sound or permanent modification of human behavior without a previous transformation of vision.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 71.

We act in a certain manner because we view the world in a particular perspective. This being the case, the liturgical artist is interested in finding ways to expand the vision of her people. The following statement suggests that love may be the key.

It is love that art and religion have most in common. The artist convinces us of the truth by dealing with us wholistically. He tries to make us feel the truth. Good art, as well as religion gets the truth inside us on a level deeper than the surface of our minds. . . . Art and religion do their work most effectively when they insert themselves into the experiences of our lives and become vital to our self-definition.¹⁷

The preceding statement indicates that the liturgical artist is motivated by love. She seeks to present the world in such a way that we, too, will fall in love with its complexity and depth. This is a daring task for the liturgical artist because she always runs the risk of rejection.

One way that a liturgical artist can insert the truth into the lives of a people is by means of performing the priestly task.

In drawing a comparison between the artist and the priest . . . of the Bible, attention is being called to a certain common stance in relation to culture. . . . Consider first the artist as a kind of priest, the celebrant of a people's treasured meanings and values. . . . The priestly role is filled whenever an artist is able to burnish a common truth until it shines or succeeds in saying effectively for others what they cannot say for themselves.¹⁸

¹⁷Padovano, p. 6.

¹⁸Hazelton, pp. 103-104.

The liturgical artist as priest helps us celebrate again and again what already has meaning for us. Furthermore, liturgical art, grounded as it is in a sacramental vision, has as its goal the lifting up of the common in order to reveal the greater reality manifested through it. The liturgical artist as priest broods upon the initially insignificant until it becomes significant, first to the liturgical artist, and then to others. This action by the artist may be likened to the action of the priest in sacramental worship.¹⁹ The liturgical artist fulfilling a priestly function must have the courage to persist in disciplined study and reflection. Such meditative work enables the liturgical artist to see with clarity the difference between surface appearance and depth, and to see how the former reveals the latter. In truth, both art and faith seek mystic experience which is the result of immersion in life.

The artist and the believer go into the wilderness of unexplored life, and bring from it the fruit of their encounter. Each is a hermit, and anchorite. Each makes an inner journey to the center of the self where one's true nature, communality with others,²⁰ and the power of the transcendent presence converge.

If this is true of the artist and the believer, it is also true of the liturgical artist who combines both in one person. To complete the thought, Padovano adds this thought: "The journey [of such an individual] is well advanced before

¹⁹Ibid., p. 106.

²⁰Padovano, p. 7.

he creates. Otherwise, there would be nothing to express."²¹

Still another way by which the liturgical artist inserts truth into the lives of the people is by assuming the prophetic office. The prophet is one who feels compelled by God to offer a critical assessment of the current state of affairs. The liturgical artist can also be thought of as such a forerunner or visionary. Although she stands within a Christian community, her acute sense of the Divine Reality sets her somewhat apart from the community she wants to serve. Like the prophets of old, the liturgical artist tends to stand on the edge of history, and struggles to discern God's future. When necessary, she seeks to lead her people in the direction of that future, away from falsehood, indifference, disorder, and disintegration. She feels called to be a "pillar of cloud by day" and a "pillar of fire" by night.

"I never had a choice," wrote Nietzsche thinking of the writing of his own Thus Spake Zarathustra. . . . Here the artist sees himself enthralled, pressed into service, answerable to the source of his inspiration.²²

This was exactly how some of the prophets felt about their commission to serve God. Jeremiah, Isaiah, Moses, and Elijah immediately come to mind. Furthermore, a study of their individual prophetic experiences reveals a common

²¹Ibid.

²²Hazelton, pp. 119, 122.

element. What one believes about God is apparently not as important to the commissioning process as what it is God believes about the prophet. In prophetic experience, God seems to look into the heart of a person. Believing in what God sees there, God chooses this individual for the despair and delight of making the Word become flesh. The spirit, like the wind, always blows wherever it wills and takes possession of whomever it pleases.

The goal of the liturgical artist exercising the prophetic office is that her people have immediate and comprehensive knowledge of the Divine Reality. The liturgical artist as prophet is a disciple of a vision so compelling that she finds herself insistently demanding that others look upon it once she has embodied it. The Divine Reality, she proclaims, has profound implications for our life together. It is a life-and-death matter. Liturgical artists fulfilling the prophetic function are persons who are aware and informed; and who possess the strong haunting suspicion that God does not want them or anyone else "to die in bed."²³ As Abraham Heschel has written: "Perhaps this is the issue that frightens the prophets. A people may be dying without being aware of it, a people may be able to survive, yet refuse to make use of their ability."²⁴

²³Harris, p. 49.

²⁴Abraham Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. xv.

Unfortunately, it is human nature to prefer the status quo to a challenge that might turn one's world upside down. Most of us would rather remain ignorant and die comfortably in bed. The prophetic task thus becomes lonely, painful, and frustrating. Taking such a stand in the midst of one's own community is always a courageous act. For the liturgical artist functioning as prophet, vocation takes the form of servanthood; a serviceability to a mission in which they are asked to lose themselves.²⁵

LITURGICAL ART AS COMMUNICATION

In Chapter 1, the section on "Art as Communication" functioned as the pivotal point in the discussion of art theory. In that section, art was defined and two key questions were answered: (1) How does symbol become art? and (2) What does art communicate? The dialogical nature of art and the artistic process was also discussed. Since a general definition of liturgical art has already been offered and elaborated upon, this section will focus exclusively on what it is that liturgical art communicates.

Simply stated, liturgical art attempts to find symbols that express the depth and breadth of the Christian faith in all its manifestations--scripture, tradition, and experience. What distinguishes liturgical art from

²⁵Hazelton, pp. 122-123.

religious art, or even Christian art, is the specific context in which it chooses to express itself. Liturgical art attempts to find signs for the mystery of faith within and for the worshipping community. At the same time, liturgical art shares the same general goal which the church manifests in all its activities, including mission. It seeks "to convey the gospel, really convey it, and see that it is really the gospel which is being conveyed."²⁶

By "gospel I mean the good news of God's action in Jesus Christ. Gospel does not mean a single authoritative transmission of the Biblical record, or a handing down of Christian "facts." The gospel is more than just the Biblical record, although the Biblical record is crucial to any consideration of gospel. Gospel means the far-reaching Christian affirmation that God made an ultimate self-revelation in specific events in human history, and that God continues to reach out through history in a similar fashion. Revelation, as it is used here, is not noun or object but an umbrella term for a total relational pattern between God and humanity.²⁷ A look at the word grace is helpful at this point.

Howsoever our definitions of God may differ, they converge in this: God is the most ultimate and universal experience imaginable. Howsoever our theologies

²⁶Ibid., pp. 81-82.

²⁷Gabriel Moran, "Teaching Within Revelation," in Durka and Smith, p. 161.

of grace may be defined, they share this in common: grace is an experience of the ultimate and universal in one's personal life.²⁸

For the Christian community, Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God's presence or graciousness; and the liturgical artist seeks after and affirms, communicates and celebrates, makes possible and indeed inescapable, this experience in all its manifestations.

Any consideration of the Biblical record for the sake of understanding the gospel in its broadest sense leads very naturally to a consideration of the Christian tradition. This is true because "the Biblical word has proved to be not truth in a fossilized, unchanging sense, but truth which is constantly adapting itself to the circumstances of the time."²⁹ In other words, for nearly two thousand years, the Church has attempted not only to give the "facts" about the life of Christ, but also insight into what those "facts" might mean. This attempt at insight leads naturally to an exposition of the Biblical "facts," and therefore to the development of "tradition." This being the case, the liturgical artist is concerned not only with the original Biblical record but also with exploring all the traditions of the Christian community which

²⁸Padovano, p. 5.

²⁹Klaus Koch, The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form Critical Method, p. 100, quoted by Mary C. Boys, "Access to Traditions and Transformation," in O'Hare, p. 19.

have grown up in response to that record. This tradition includes not only a heritage of custom or practice, but also a heritage of written interpretation such as theology or devotional literature. The liturgical artist is interested in making these traditions of meaning and reason accessible in all their vitality, variety, and specificity. "Accessibility" is a good word here because it "is best seen in its exemplars: erecting bridges, making metaphors, building highways, providing introductions and commentaries, translating foreign terms, map-making, and ice-breaking (literally and figuratively)." ³⁰

Tradition is the handed-down body of understanding which guides and propels the current faith community through its daily existence. Tradition forms a community's identity. It is the living and lived self-consciousness of the people of faith. Whether it manifests itself directly as memory, or more indirectly as shared history, tradition holds a community together and serves as its operational base. This tradition also functions as the permanent reservoir which the community draws upon for the nourishment of new possibilities. Old structures of meaning can be broken down and used again as new bricks in a process of construction and reconstruction. Tradition is never set in stone. It becomes the basis of something new. It is always a resource

³⁰Boys, p. 15.

for our own faithfulness.

This process of construction and reconstruction of tradition goes on constantly, whether it is recognized or not. Such construction and reconstruction is motivated by need, the need to live in the present. As Mary C. Boys has noted, "Traditions are reactualized for the sake of living a relationship with God and neighbor. . . . Traditions provide the reflective basis for action."³¹ Therefore, tradition is constantly being applied and used in our experience and the experience of the community. To conceptualize tradition as a permanent reservoir suggests that there is a dialogical element inherent in the passing on of traditions.

To make tradition accessible is to open up the past, rather than to set it aside as "other." It is to let the past speak in the present for the sake of the future; it is not, on the contrary, to dictate past answers for present problems.³²

In addition, as suggested earlier, Christians affirm that God continues always to do a new thing. God's self-revelation is on-going in our midst. Therefore, Christian experience is not only a manifestation of reworked tradition, but a manifestation of God's newest action. Experience must be considered for itself as well as its connection with the past. In every age, God is making new demands and offering new Vehicles of grace. Every era and every

³¹Ibid., p. 23.

³²Ibid., p. 20.

new experience in a community or individual's life represents a possibility of insight that has never been before.

The liturgical artist is free to use this accumulated and varied expression of gospel in a number of ways. The liturgical artist can help with the process of demolishing sterile traditions, remediating those overgrown with accretions, and providing introductions to traditions overlooked in a preoccupation with relevance,³³ in order to aid the present experience of the Christian community. It is not breaking with tradition as such, but freedom in the way one uses tradition that makes a work of liturgical art creative and helpful to the community it serves. Liturgical art also relies upon the better known lenses drawn from our religious tradition such as creation, incarnation, judgment, and sin. The liturgical artist works with these time-worn traditions so that we would come to know ourselves and these traditions in a fresh way.

Finally, the liturgical artist can present to us our own current experience as it unfolds before us. When the liturgical artist attempts to communicate the gospel, she is really attempting to hand over symbols that make meaning in life accessible. The liturgical artist attempts to pass on to a particular worshipping community all those earlier and current tracings in the sand that point toward

³³Ibid., p. 22.

the ultimate reality that the community is seeking.

In closing, it should be noted that the relationship between scripture, tradition, and experience is, in any given moment, that of a triangle. The three are held in creative tension and each functions in such a way as to serve as a check for another.

Scripture and experience must judge the tradition; scripture and tradition must judge experience; tradition and experience must judge scripture; while all are judged by the final authority upon which the community of faith rests: God's action in Jesus Christ.³⁴

With this all inclusive definition of gospel in mind, it is possible to understand with greater clarity the following statement by Roger Hazelton. It is a statement about the arts but it also holds true for liturgical art as a subdiscipline or specialty of art.

A work is not Christian merely because it is done by a Christian artist; that would be like saying that one's suit is Christian because it is made by a Christian tailor. Neither is a work Christian because the purpose for which it is intended is Christian; that would be like saying that the furnace in the Church basement is Christian because it was intended to warm Christians in the sanctuary above. Such factors as the allegiance and purpose of the artist are certainly part of the provenance of a Christian work, and yet they do not alone make it Christian. . . . A work of art is Christian if it bodies forth and so conveys or opens up the gospel to men and women of any age or place. It is Christian if, and only if, the revealing and reconciling action of God in Jesus Christ informs it ex opere operato, as it were. A work of art does not have to be an ostensible representation of the gospel in order to be Christian, but it

³⁴ John H. Westerhoff, "Contemporary Spirituality, Revelation, Myth and Ritual," in Durka and Smith, p. 20.

must in some degree make the gospel present again, entering the stage of our life in the world and addressing us as the human beings we are.³⁵

LITURGICAL ART AS PLAYFULNESS

How is liturgical art a form of playfulness? What significant functions does it perform in this capacity? Any discussion of this matter begins with a consideration of the basic Christian affirmation of faith. Liturgical art is concerned with the creation of incarnate symbols that convey the Christian's delight in God's ultimate goodness. Liturgical art is a form of celebration. In the words of Hazelton:

Living as we do A.D. and not B.C., on this side of Christmas and Easter, we have much to endure, but also much to enjoy. It is not alone the goodness of creation that we delight in, but the goodness of God shown forth in the face of Christ and irradiated throughout the universe as Teilhard de Chardin expressed it. Because of Christ we know what time it is, who we are, and what the world is really like.³⁶

The phrases "shown forth" and "irradiated throughout" are significant. They allude to the sacramental vision discussed earlier. The liturgical artist singles out and lifts up those elements of the gospel that need to be joyfully honored. The liturgical artist attempts to help the worshipping community "practice its scales of rejoicing."

This attitude of celebration appears to contrast

³⁵ Hazelton, pp. 75-76.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 149-150.

sharply with the stance of the so-called secular or non-religious world. Hazelton describes that stance in the following way:

On every hand we are being told today that ours is a functional, operational age, one from which the notes of festivity and solemnity alike must be absent. The world is "sheer world"; things become things to do; the nouns of the earlier metaphysical and religious ages become the verbs of this profane and pragmatic one. Depth and height are both foreign to our experience, intent as it must be upon manipulating means and organizing data.³⁷

Although Hazelton can be criticized for overstating the case, there is truth in this generalized statement. A large segment of the population holds such a world view to some extent. The Christian community, however, easily incorporates such an outlook into its own statement of faith. Christian faith affirms that the world is not just sheer world. Things are not just things. The nouns of the earlier ages are not just verbs in today's world. Height and depth are real aspects of reality. The faithful, including the liturgical artist, celebrate a world that is "both/and" in terms of all these dimensions. They also proclaim that the gospel of today is the same gospel proclaimed 2,000 years ago and they hold that this good news is more than enough.

Such an affirmation moves us into a second consideration of liturgical art as playfulness. The

³⁷Ibid., p. 151.

liturgical artist recognizes that "grace" and "gratuitous" have a cognate relationship. She affirms that the good news of the gospel is totally uncalled for and, therefore, of profound significance. At this point, the Christian concept of foolishness comes into play. In the words of the apostle Paul, "We preach Christ and him crucified, which is a stumbling block to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles" (I Cor. 1:23). The liturgical artist affirms the folly and foolishness of the gospel, and she does so in an incarnate, material fashion. As Maria Harris, a Christian educator, has written, "The ambiguity, the contrasting of opposites, the change in expectations, and the element of surprise are all signs of foolishness."³⁸ The Christian faith is grounded on such foolishness, and in such foolishness the liturgical artist rejoices and dabbles by means of the medium she has chosen. The liturgical artist also knows that to proclaim foolishness is to join ranks with an ancient artistic tradition of the Church. As Westerhoff has noted:

One of the early representations of Christ in Christian art depicts a crucified human figure with the head of an ass. The debate on its meaning continues, but I am convinced that these catacomb Christians had a deep sense of the comic absurdity of their position. A wretched band of slaves, derelicts and square pegs, they must have sensed how ludicrous their claims appeared. The revelation they announced,

³⁸Harris, p. 49.

lived and died for was irrational and illogical. Christ for them must have seemed something of a holy fool and they knew they were fools for Christ. More important, they had faith and hope in the eternal foolishness of God. To have faith in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is to live in the ludicrous world of imagination, poetry, and metaphor.³⁹

Liturgical art lives in the same world of imagination, poetry, and metaphor and uses the language of that world in order to playfully express itself and the Christian vision of good news.

Maria Harris, who has already been mentioned, suggests that the flip side of foolishness is parabolic activity. Parable, she suggests, is the serious side of foolishness. Parable breaks down all our preconceptions about the world and makes room for God. In an article entitled "Word, Sacrament, and Prophecy," she shares the following reflections on the work of John Dominic Crossan.

John Dominic Crossan's formulation in The Dark Interval gives rich insight into the meaning of parable. In Crossan's typology, "Myth establishes world, apologue defends world, narrative investigates world, satire attacks world, and parable subverts world." A parable is a story calculated to show the limits of our myths, the flaws in our apologues, and shadowy places in our narratives. Like satire, parable reminds us of limit and confronts us with the frightening realization that things could, quite possibly, be completely other than they seem.⁴⁰

Harris's discussion intersects with still another function of liturgical art. Like all forms of playfulness,

³⁹Westerhoff, p. 21.

⁴⁰Harris, p. 47.

liturgical art expands the horizons of human perception. Liturgical art can easily function as parable. For the sake of the good news, the liturgical artist may find herself playfully shattering what appears to be steadfastly firm. By means of her art and artistry, the liturgical artist may ask questions that no one else thought to ask. In order to keep the future open for God, the liturgical artist may have to suggest alternative answers for current faith questions. Finally, the liturgical artist may need to become a parable in her own right; one of the "people who subvert, who affirm ambiguity, who are able to reconcile opposites by taking risks."⁴¹ Harris notes that this is a hallowed tradition. It is part of the Old Testament tradition of prophecy and it is cited by the apostle Paul himself (2 Cor 6:8-10).⁴²

The parable-teller par excellence, of course, was Jesus. The liturgical artist can look to him for hints on how to carry on her own parabolic activity. The stories of Jesus were parables intended to shatter the structural security of the listener's world and thus to transform that world in light of the kingdom of God.⁴³ From a study of the parabolic activity of Jesus, the liturgical artist learns

⁴¹Ibid., p. 51.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³John D. Crossan, The Dark Interval: Towards A Theology of Story (Niles, IL: Argus Communications, 1975), p. 123.

that her task is not to interpret parables, but to create parables which in turn interpret the worshipper. Parables are experiences which are perpetually unfinished because they "open onto an unfinished world . . .,"⁴⁴ a world that is still in the process of being created.

One way of concluding this discussion of foolishness and parable is by noting that the two work together to help liturgical art accomplish the task of luring the faith community into the deeper dimensions of the Divine Reality reflected in the gospel. "Lure" conjures up the image of bright, playful teasing, as well as gentle, yet firm, leading-forth. This ability to "lure" relates to the objective reality of art which has already been discussed. Like all art, good liturgical art manifests a compelling intensity. It functions as a "trap for meditation." "It must have within itself the power of attracting and holding one's attention, of engaging the listener, reader, or spectator for at least a passing moment on its own terms."⁴⁵ The use of the word "meditation" can be deceptive. As Hazelton notes, this phrase conjures up images of

. . . prolonged dwelling upon an intellectual problem or period of mystical concentration with which this word is often confused. Art is productive of

⁴⁴Robert W. Funk, "The Good Samaritan as Metaphor," Semeia, 2 (1974), 76, quoted in Boys, p. 27.

⁴⁵Hazelton, p. 21.

meditation in the sense that it demands that we pause, if only for an instant, in the press and rush of daily existence, and pause for the purpose that something may be given to us. It is, or ought to be, more a focus than a target, more a disclosure than a decorative embellishment. The greater the work of art, the more pronounced this magnetizing quality.⁴⁶

There is an important second half to this all-embracing intensity. Once liturgical art lures persons into participation in the religious dimensions, it may interpret that dimension.⁴⁷ Lure and interpretation function together to create a particular kind of aesthetic experience known as "participative experience." In this experience self-consciousness is temporarily lost and the artist or worshipper finds access to new realities. Norma Thompson describes such absorption and its outcome in the following statement:

If such an experience of participation is deeply felt, one senses the "awe-full-ness" of that further reality, and one desires even deeper participation and feels a sense of reverence, awe, and concern for the ultimate. The human is drawn into Being.⁴⁸

This type of participation is the goal of liturgical art. By means of affirmative foolish action and questioning parabolic activity, liturgical art playfully "lures" the worshipper into the depths of gospel in hopes this

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 21-22.

⁴⁷Norma H. Thompson, "Art and Religious Experience," in Durka and Smith, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 36.

experience will happen. When it does, it is an occasion for celebration and rejoicing in the faith community.

Finally, there remains one last function of liturgical art as playfulness that deserves special mention. Like all kinds of playfulness, liturgical art is a type of psychodrama that allows the artist or the worshipper an opportunity to act out the forthcoming future. The liturgical artist playfully puts together the disparate bits and pieces of reality in order to integrate them into the whole. With each work of art the liturgical artist rehearses some of the alternatives of faith and forms a new faith statement. This type of play acting is a kind of problem-solving with implications beyond its own sphere. This aspect of liturgical art should be applied to all of life. In the words of Dorothy Sayers:

If the common man asks the artist for help in producing moral judgments or practical solutions, the only answer he can get is something like this: you must learn to handle practical situations as I handle the material of my art form: you must take them and use them to make a new thing.⁴⁹

By "making a new thing," the liturgical artist serves as witness to the fact that it is possible to bring inner and outer harmony out of apparent disparity and confusion. Playfulness always leads into new creation.

⁴⁹Dorothy Sayers, The Mind of the Maker (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1941), p. 192.

LITURGICAL ART AS HISTORIC MOMENT

All art has an historical dimension, and liturgical art is no exception. Every manifestation of liturgical art is time-bound to some degree because it is the incarnate expression of a certain faith community in a particular era. There is also a tradition in the liturgical art, whether the form is drama, dance, textiles, music, or something else. The liturgical artist must come to terms with this tradition or she will be unable to move beyond it to a fresh creation. In liturgical art, knowledge of the past is mandatory. Scripture and tradition are the stuff of creation. A liturgical artist uses them to dialogue with experience. Only in this way does the liturgical artist do her part in helping the faith community move forward into the future. A good liturgical artist heeds the earlier suggestion of Dorothy Sayers that her work should be a "fresh focus of power through which former streams of beauty, emotion, and reflection are directed."

Liturgical art functions as historic moment in three distinct ways. First, it is bound uniquely with the concept of "Pentecost." The use of the word Pentecost at this juncture refers to a unique manifestation of gospel at any given moment in time. This concept of Pentecost is borrowed from Sayers, who describes it first in the context

of education.

It is the business of education to wait upon Pentecost. Unhappily, there is something about educational syllabuses, and especially about examination papers, which seems to be rather out of harmony with Pentecostal manifestations. The Energy of Ideas does not seem to descend into the receptive mind with quite that rush of cloven fire which we ought to expect. . . . But Pentecost will happen, whether within or without official education. From some quarter or another, the Power will descend, to flame or to smoulder until it is ready to issue in a new revelation.⁵⁰

Pentecost, according to Sayers, is any Idea made incarnate by Energy that consequently has Power. Sayers also notes that all activity (including Pentecostal activity) is of God.⁵¹

The liturgical artist affirms Sayers' basic definition of Pentecost and agrees wholeheartedly with Sayers' assertion that all activity is of God. Pentecost, as defined by the liturgical artist, is the intersection of insight and energy that leads to a fresh burst of creativity capable of communicating the gospel anew. The liturgical artist believes it is her duty and the duty of all believers to wait upon Pentecost. She knows that there is simply no one form which is proper or correct for conveying the meaning of what God does for us in Christ. As Hazelton has written:

Any cultural epoch will have its own preferences and rejections, its own tastes and distastes with regard

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 112.

⁵¹Ibid.

to the array of styles both traditional and contemporary that are offered to it. And within that epoch there will be sharp disagreement as to which styles of the past or present speak most truly, pertinently, or amply to the human condition.⁵²

Due to the fact that Pentecost will continually take new forms, the liturgical artist also understands that she may have to be the one who helps others recognize Pentecost when it happens.

The liturgical artist who waits on Pentecost does so all the while she is addressing herself to a number of temporal issues. She may choose to focus her creative energy on a worship event of a singular nature such as an ordination, a wedding, or an All-Saints celebration. She may choose to respond artistically to an entire liturgical season such as Advent. She may choose to work within the "beads-on-a-string" liturgical format of some Protestant communities, whereby one worship experience does not necessarily relate to the experience that precedes or follows it. All of these represent ways of serving and a participating in the liturgy of the Christian community. The liturgical artist may also use her chosen art form to create a complete worship experience. Designing a total environment or creating a cantata that would function as the worship service are examples of this approach. In contrast, the liturgical artist may also choose to relate to the

⁵²Hazelton, p. 78.

worship experience by means of a single work of art.

Finally, the liturgical artist must make decisions regarding materials and their intended use. Liturgical art can be intentionally temporary or aimed at some sort of permanence. Paper constructions hung for one occasion will have a different life-span than a chalice pounded out of silver.

Amid these temporal decisions about setting and style, the liturgical artist is able to acknowledge and accept that there are no permanent successes. The liturgical artist who understands Pentecost knows that it comes and goes like the Spirit. Art and artistry permit the faithful only momentary glances into the heart of the gospel. Therefore, the liturgical artist goes about faithfully fulfilling her task of service to the gospel and worshipping community with all the skill and devotion she can muster, and she trusts in the knowledge that this is enough. Her inability to achieve lasting success is offset by the everpresent possibility of new flashes of insight and energy. Padovano sums up this mindset in the following way:

It is true that the artist and the believer do not achieve permanent victories. But if they are true artists and genuine believers they do not require total success. They differ from the technocrat and totalitarian because they never seek control and because they never expect perfect order. Just a little tension.⁵³

⁵³Padovano, p. 12.

Liturgical art is also historic moment because it attempts to journey alongside a particular faith community. Worship becomes the place for raising all the issues of faith as they are encountered. Such a journey has at least four characteristics.

First, the journey always involves two great challenges that need to be named. Maria Harris sums them up in the following way:

[There is] the challenge of holding on, sometimes until the arms ache and the back bends and sweat runs down the face; and its paradoxical complement: letting go, with the kind of intuitive leap, conditioned hunch and creative hope that pushes boundaries.⁵⁴

Liturgical art is well suited for the portrayal and exploration of these two challenges. It permits simultaneous dialogue between and with them. The liturgical artist can present these challenges as two sides of the same coin and use the resources of the gospel to do so. In a world that tends to divide life into either/or categories, or fragments reality by means of compartmentalization, this ability to depict the full span of the human options simultaneously is very necessary. In this way, liturgical art witnesses to the truth of the following statement by Padovano: "Genuine aesthetic experience humanizes us not by making us suppose we shall no longer be weak but by allowing us to sense the grace in us."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Harris, p. 41.

⁵⁵Padovano, p. 11.

Secondly, as coparticipant in the faith journey, liturgical art can help with the questions and doubts that occur along the way. It offers us a chance to embody such doubts and questions in order that we might seriously reflect on them. Such an embodiment is not so much an attempt to answer the questing pilgrim heart, but rather an affirmation of it. By bringing into the light the questions and doubts that have been kept in the dark, the liturgical artist allows us to see and touch and claim what is often ignored or denied. Questioning and doubt are allowed to take their rightful place in the faith journey. In the words of John Westerhoff:

We need to doubt and question. . . . At this point the "religion of the head" becomes equally important with the "religion of the heart," and act of the intellect, critical judgment, and inquiry into the meanings and purposes of the story and the ways by which the community of faith lives are essential. Serious study of the story, and engagement with historical, theological, and moral thinking about life become important. The despairs and doubts of the searching soul need to be affirmed and persons need to join others in the intellectual quest for understanding.⁵⁶

Thirdly, the faith journey always requires some firsthand encounter of the gospel. Such encounters play a significant role in spiritual and intellectual development. Liturgical art offers the Christian educator a means of putting persons or groups in direct contact with their own

⁵⁶John H. Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 96-97.

resources and the resources of the gospel. This need for a "hands-on" approach to the gospel is the concern of a great many in Christian education today.

Educators in recent years have laid stress on the need for perceptual experiences that will stimulate intellectual growth. Such sensory experiences involve a learner directly; it is he who does the touching, seeing, or tasting, not the teacher. As he becomes involved he learns. The more senses he uses the better he learns. As he expresses himself in the arts and languages, he clarifies and retains learning. Perceptual experiences are basic for building concepts and living a satisfying life with oneself, in relation to God, others, and the world.⁵⁷

Liturgical art used in individual or group learning situations offers such an opportunity for perceptual experience. Artistic expression, such as banner-making, dance, "readers' theatre," or drama, functions as a means of initiating the faithful into a deeper experience of the gospel.

It should also be noted that the liturgical artist's affirmation of the unfinished nature of the gospel has major implications for this "hands-on" approach to Christian education. If the gospel by its very nature is constantly opening out into the future, then the Church is not only teacher, but also learner. Liturgical art represents an opportunity for reciprocal learning that touches all involved in the process. The liturgical artist and learner or the educator and student can journey together for awhile in mutual exploration of the medium and the heritage. They

⁵⁷Thompson, p. 42.

can support each other in the common task of trying to comprehend that which has captured their attention. Sometimes students will be able to see the many dimensions and implications of the gospel with greater clarity than their teacher. Sometimes the learning situation is reversed. Each learner gains something from the other co-learner in his or her learning coendeavor.

Reciprocal learning is particularly important because it fosters a sense of power which is so vital to the faith journey. Without a sense of power, the faithful cannot adequately respond to the gospel they have encountered. The implications of nonreciprocal learning take us in the direction of powerlessness. As Harris notes:

The tendency of formal schooling to isolate children during a period of "preparation" for adulthood has produced a rigid system of age-grading which has as one effect a fractionation of the human career. This tends to hinder the development of meaningful relationships among generations and cultivates a fragmented, rather than continuous concept of self. The prevailing idea that children can learn only from, not with, adults and the forced submission of youth to the rule of adults amplifies the conflict between generations and encourages a posture of dependence, a sense of powerlessness that may carry over from youth to adulthood.⁵⁸

There must always exist a mutuality of education in faith.⁵⁹

The fourth aspect of the faith journey involves a recognition and naming of death. In our death-denying

⁵⁸Harris, p. 43.

⁵⁹Boys, p. 21.

culture, such acknowledgment and naming are difficult. The liturgical artist who journeys alongside a particular worshipping community must concern herself with death,

. . . not only the physical death toward which the journey moves, but the death of childhood, of dreams, of marriages, of institutions. Such issues of life and death are central concerns of those who would educate religiously.⁶⁰

Furthermore, the liturgical artist recognizes a "familiar undersong" in these issues:

Underlying them and influencing them if one has been and is being shaped by the tradition of the Christian churches, is a particular understanding of word . . . to engage in journey is to be affected by . . . logos, a word that means a human being who has preceded us on the journey, and who is in some sense not only truth and life, but the way of journey itself.⁶¹

In other words, the liturgical artist uses the gospel as a major resource for the interpretation of death.

Liturgical art is historic moment in a third and final way. It is a form of theological enterprise, and theology is always historical in nature. A brief look at the definition and description of theology will clarify this statement.

Theology is the "studied expression of faith."⁶² This study always occurs within the faith community where scripture, tradition, and experience intersect and exercise

⁶⁰Harris, pp. 41-42.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Mary Elizabeth Mullins Moore, "Education for Continuity and Change" (Ph.D. dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, 1981), p. 96.

their influence. Theology is both the "tool" which the community uses to interpret these three elements and the "title" which the community gives to the systematic belief system which is the outgrowth of this process of interpretation. Once this dynamic process lying behind all theology is recognized, it seems more appropriate to claim that a faith community "does not have a theology so much as it does theologizing."⁶³ A faith community is "continually forming and reforming its faith expressions in light of the past, present and future."⁶⁴ Theology is the ongoing practice of interpretation and transformation. It is also a statement of time-bound belief. It is the provisional synthesis of scripture, tradition and experience which works "for the time being," although it can transcend its own time by being accepted or reconstituted by another faith community.

A study of Biblical theology confirms this definition and description. The history of the Biblical canon offers us a vital analogue for the process just described. In the words of Mary C. Boys:

In OT studies, for instance, much discussion centers on how Israel's faith came to expression through a long and complex process of development; how memories precious to one region (Jerusalem, Bethel, Shechem) or group (priest, wisemen, Levites, prophets, court officials) were shaped, applied, and passed on; and how

⁶³Ibid., pp. 96, 99.

⁶⁴Ibid.

these "streams of tradition" ultimately flowed together to form a sacred literature.⁶⁵

Boys then continues her discussion by utilizing various examples from the "tradition history":

Von Rad characterizes the prophets as those who "reactualized" . . . the ancient traditions by selecting, combining, and rejecting various components of tradition. . . . [For example,] Second Isaiah drew freely upon the tradition of the exodus to encourage the exiles. This was in actuality a very bold reactualization: the prophet appropriates the language descriptive of Israel's most sacred event to give hope in the midst of what appeared to be the greatest tragedy the people had experienced.⁶⁶

Put in other words, the scripture, tradition, and experience of Israel continually served as the basis for a new synthesis and statement of faith. Theology used all the elements present in that faith community to "narrate, instruct, inform, and interpret" the experience of that community.⁶⁷

These are examples drawn from the Old Testament, but New Testament scholarship bears out the same pattern and process. "Modern biblical scholarship . . . reveals the inadequacies of any scheme which divorces transmission from re-creation."⁶⁸

Liturgical art is also the studied expression of faith. Like the so-called theologians found in the faith

⁶⁵Boys, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 20.

communities of old, the liturgical artist is not so much interested in reverencing the past, as in understanding the present experience of faith. However, the liturgical artist as theologian relies on a different kind of language for her study. Liturgical art is a "tool" for interpreting scripture, tradition, and experience, as well as a "title" given those perfected symbols which incarnate the belief of a particular worshipping community. Like all theology, liturgical art is a form of historic moment because it is time-bound. It is essentially a temporary structure that houses contemporary belief, although it can transcend its own time and often does. Like theology, liturgical art as a form of systematic or intentional study must "serve and change, continue ancient symbols and explore new possibilities, hand on traditions and transform the world."⁶⁹

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 14.

Chapter 3

PROCLAIMING THE PASCAL MYSTERY 1981: THE INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

An actual venture in liturgical art will be documented in the third chapter of this project. The rationale for such a chapter is threefold. First, this chapter is intended as a "fleshing out" of the theory found in Chapters 1 and 2. This chapter is a start-to-finish case-study that answers the questions, "How does theory manifest itself in practice?" and "What does liturgical art look like?" Theory always needs to be grounded in practice, and liturgical art is no exception. Chapters 1 and 2 allowed us to study the "trunk of the tree" from many angles. This chapter will allow us to examine several "leaves" at close range.

Secondly, this chapter is intended as an offering to those who have never been involved with an artistic venture. My experience has shown me that such persons often have a difficult time understanding what it is an artist does and why an artist does it. In the words of Dorothy Sayers,

To the outsider, the spectacle of a writer "taken ill with an idea" usually presents itself as a subject for unseemly mirth. . . . The ridicule is largely defensive--the nervous protest of the negative and

and chaotic against the mysterious and terrible energy of the creative. But that a work of creation struggles and insistently demands to be brought into being is a fact that no genuine artist would think of denying. . . .¹

It is hoped this chapter will offer those who are inexperienced or mystified an opportunity to enter into an artistic endeavor through the "eyes" of an artist. Hopefully, this opportunity to "walk in an artist's shoes" will give them new insight and empathy for that which was totally foreign.

Finally, this chapter is intended as an offering for all those who have participated in an artistic venture, and who may have thus come face-to-face with the mystery of intense creativity. Time and experience have shown me that there is a common thread running throughout all genuine or incarnate artistic expression, no matter what the medium. This chapter will function as a detailed biography of a liturgical art project. In this way the common thread might be discerned and examined. There are distinctive transitions or movements within the artistic process that seem to be present in all artistic embodiment, and may be essential if a work of creativity is to move beyond mere symbolization to the incarnate stage we call art. Of course, there is always a risk in trying to dissect the artistic endeavor. The meaning of art cannot be

¹Dorothy L. Sayers, The Mind of the Maker (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1941), p. 140-141.

separated from its form. As Hazelton has remarked,

Artists . . . are least artistic when they comment on their own art and attempt to convey it cognitively. The philosophy or doctrine behind a work of art is not impressive when abstracted from it. The meaning of art is embedded in the very form in which it is presented.²

This is very true, but such an attempt at commentary may be the only way for artists to really dialogue with each other about an experience they share in common.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the fall of 1980, I was in a seminary class taught by Father Jon Olson, rector/priest at Christ Church Parish, Ontario, California. In this class centering on the arts, Jon suggested that I consider the possibility of serving as his artistic director during Lent 1981. Jon wanted to see me put my experience and expertise as a textile artist "to the test" at his parish. I accepted immediately. Jon is an astute theologian and staunch defender of the arts in all their manifestations. I knew it would be a marvelous learning experience, as well as a privilege, to work under his guidance. His offer represented my first official ecumenical venture in liturgical art. I am a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

²Anthony Padovana, "Aesthetic Experience and Redemptive Grace," Aesthetic Dimensions of Religious Education, ed. Gloria Durka and JoanMarie Smith (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 9.

minister by trade and calling. I live and work in an ecumenically-minded tradition that focuses its worship around a weekly "breaking of bread," an invitation to confess faith in Christ, reading of scriptures, a sermon, congregational singing, and extemporaneous prayer. Most Disciples tend toward a low-church view of ritual and ceremonial.³ In contrast, Christ Church is a small, yet dynamic Anglo-Catholic Episcopal parish. In other words, it is well steeped in the high-church liturgical tradition. This tradition emphasizes ritual ("the prescribed form of words which constitute an act of worship"⁴) and ceremonial ("the prescribed and formal actions that constitute worship," i.e., the use of incense, the kiss of peace, the use of vestments, the elevation of the host, etc.⁵). At the same time, the worshipping community at Christ Church was thoughtful about the "mystery of faith" it proclaimed, and unafraid to explore the depth and breadth of that mystery. From the beginning of my time there, I experienced it as theologically sophisticated and open to receiving what I might offer as a liturgical artist specializing in textiles.

³ Keith Watkins, "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," The Westminster Dictionary of Worship, ed. J. G. Davies (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 233-234.

⁴ Ibid., p. 336.

⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

BASIC OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS

Every individual begins a new endeavor with a set of assumptions and presuppositions. These guide and direct the course a venture will take. This is true whether one is cutting down a tree or driving a truck. The experience of an artist or liturgical artist is no different. My artistic endeavor at Christ Church Parish was guided by the theory already discussed as well as a set of operational assumptions. Some of these assumptions were clarified during the process and some were clear from the beginning. For the sake of insight into the artistic experience, I have attempted to break these operational assumptions down into separate components. This is a somewhat artificial tactic for no set of assumptions and presuppositions is that tidy or distinct. However, such a breakdown offers insight into the artistic process as it unfolded at Christ Church.

Assumption 1

Worship is a total experience that should involve the whole of a worshipper's being. Worship is not "spectator sport," but active celebration of the good news of God's action in Jesus Christ. Celebration can range from physical movement, such as a processional, to quiet contemplation or silence. Worship should call on all the

human faculties: body, mind, senses, imagination, emotions, and memory.

Assumption 2

Art appreciation begins with a deliberate and sustained exposure to any given work. Individuals need to be given time to live with something in order for it to have impact upon them. Most of us are tourists in our dealings with the arts. As Hazelton suggests, ". . . we come and go, more interested in obvious quick benefits or in forming right opinions than in letting the artwork grow upon us, move toward us out of its own depth."⁶

Assumption 3

Good art will eventually have its way with those who are exposed to it. It is not necessary to comment on it from the pulpit. One must trust the power of the creation. As Padovano states:

Good art is recognized by those who have grace in their hearts, a sensitivity to presence or mystery which allows them to see what is there and submit to it. God is encountered in bread or water, in human needs and hopes when the heart of a believer is graced with the capacity to respond to the fullness of life in a concrete situation.⁷

⁶Roger Hazelton, A Theological Approach to the Arts (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 27.

⁷Padovano, pp. 3-4.

Assumption 4

There is virtue in limited things. Not all artistic expression has to stand forever. A piece of music does not have to be performed every Sunday. A series of banners should not hang on the wall until they drop. There is value in the liturgical artist exploring the concept of temporary art. Art is still valuable even when it is created for one span of time or one experience.

Assumption 5

Liturgical art is never created in a vacuum. It springs from and belongs to a particular faith community at a particular stage in its journey. The liturgical artist must be acquainted with the history, the people, the issues, the important symbols, and the life-style of a particular worshipping community before she begins her artistic endeavor. The art that speaks to us is art that correlates with our training, our environment, and our experience. Human minds put together all the perceptions of any given situation. For example, crosses and crucifixes, statues and walls, mosaics and icons, hymns, dances, music, sermons, anthems, and a myriad of other forms, shapes, colors, and sounds are brought together, sorted, and combined with one's own perception of reality.⁸

⁸Norma H. Thompson, "Art and Religious Experience"

Meaning is found in the intersection of the two.

Assumption 6

All liturgical art must take into account the givens of the worship environment. A serious consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of a particular space and how such a space should be addressed artistically is mandatory. This suggests a "doctrine of creation" whereby liturgical art is always designed with a particular place or location in mind.

Assumption 7

Honoring the tradition of the liturgical year is a valid means for addressing the gospel in all its manifestations. When one follows the church year sequence (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost), and explores the scripture, tradition and experience unique to each season, one has a sense of having come full circle. The whole of the gospel is revealed.

Assumption 8

One can never honor all the elements to be found in a particular liturgical season. The liturgical artist must choose two or three elements from among the rich heritage, and focus her attention on them. To attempt

in Durka and Smith, p. 38.

more is to divide one's energy and effort, and thus endanger the artistic endeavor.

Assumption 9

Lent is the liturgical season that calls the worshipper's attention to the reality of daily existential brokenness, the same brokenness mirrored by the passion of Christ. Lent is a "symbol" in that it attempts to incarnate this symbol of reality.

Assumption 10

The artistic enterprise is something that small groups of committed persons can work on together. Such a group needs an artistic facilitator with experience and expertise.

Assumption 11

Group process in the arts consists of both shared experience and space for individual reflection and creativity. The liturgical artist who is functioning as facilitator sees to it that the group endeavor consists of both types of experience, for she recognizes that art is the fruit of both.

Assumption 12

The artistic process requires structure and control.

Art never just happens. Creativity springs from discipline. Practical concerns such as time, place, people, technique, materials, cost, size, and focus have to be decided in order for the artistic venture to begin. The liturgical artist or artists must sit down and decide the basic agenda and form of the project, thereby creating the focus from which so-called spontaneity or constructive freedom can begin.

Assumption 13

The liturgical artist facilitating participants in the artistic process must take responsibility for the project as an educational event for those persons. Proper tools, learning aids, a setting conducive to creativity, and necessary skills should be made available to those involved in order to enhance the experience of the artists and the quality of the creation.

Assumption 14

Involvement in the artistic process can take many forms. Sometimes an individual will offer an idea for a project. Sometimes an individual chooses to be part of the support system. Sometimes involvement means direct participation in the process. Sometimes involvement takes the form of being the appreciative recipient or part of the audience. There must be enough breadth in any

project to allow for such varieties of involvement according to personal choice.

Assumption 15

Some decisions made at the beginning of an artistic endeavor will probably change during the course of the creative process. Flexibility is built-in and assumed. Factors such as time, intuition, and person power must be given credence. Change is the nature of the artistic process. "In aesthetics, unlike the technological aspect of science, theory follows, or better, is distilled from practice."⁹

Assumption 16

No one person ever has all the necessary insight or vision there is to have. We learn from each other. Therefore, dialogue is a necessary part of the liturgical artistic enterprise. The liturgical artist must be in constant interaction with the worshipping community it serves. That community will spark and inspire the artist, and the community will be sparked and inspired by the artist. "Art exists to be seen, heard, read, responded to by others who are also special kinds of artists, whose ability to make response is their native human endowment

⁹Durka and Smith, p. xii.

and experience."¹⁰

Assumption 17

A basic separation always exists between God and humanity. Therefore, "faith involves a good tension between human modes of expressive communications and God himself, whom our human tools can never adequately grasp."¹¹ The purpose of liturgical art is to always deepen the mystery, not to control it. In contrast, "Heresay is always the attempt to capture the mystery, to render it so intelligible that one feels able to grapple with God on one's own terms."¹²

Assumption 18

The liturgical artist should never be afraid to try anything new. Instead, she should be willing to explore whatever is presented to her, trusting her training and intuition to guide her responses. The liturgical artist knows herself as one who can stand "on the edge of history with the winds of the future blowing wildly in her face."

¹¹Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, ed. by Bishops Committee on Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1978), p. 7.

¹²Padovano, p. 9.

IN THE BEGINNING--PRE-LENT

I began attending worship at Christ Church right after Christmas in 1980. I did so in order to acquaint myself with the unique character and concerns of the worshipping community of that church. I immediately began to feel at home. This was due in part to the fact that some of the members of Christ Church were students from the seminary I attended. I had a built-in support community from the very beginning. However, I also used the two-and-a-half months before Lent to become acquainted with parishioners I did not know. New friendships were formed. I tried to join in like any new member of a worshipping community would join in, for Christ Church was going to be my home for a while.

In addition, I found the content and style of Anglican worship aesthetically pleasing. I enjoy the kneeling, the standing, the singing of psalms in plain-song, the movement forward to receive Communion, and the other ceremonial such as vestments and incense. Anglican worship involves all the senses, and there is something profoundly powerful about putting one's whole body "on the line" for one's faith. As an artist, such a holistic approach to life makes all the sense in the world.

At the same time I was becoming acquainted with the community. Jon Olson and I began a series of weekly

Thursday morning meetings. It is fascinating to review the journal I kept during that time because our discussions of art, theology, and possible artistic projects for Lent covered vast expanses of territory. We dreamed a great many big dreams; indeed, there were far too many of them to ever accomplish in one Lenten season. However, these forays of imagination served a very important function in our creative process. They became the means by which we were able to circle in and finally center on what needed to happen at Christ Church for Lent 1981. From that process I learned the truth of the following words: "It is not so much in rational planning as in the imagination that the world is changed. We live by our images and dreams, our visions and hopes."¹³

It was during these weekly meetings that Jon and I spent time in the sanctuary considering how its space could be best utilized during the Lenten season. By the third week of February, we had focused our attention on four different themes, and chosen three distinct art forms by which to grapple with these themes. By that time, almost all decisions about practical matters had also been made.

The first theme was drawn directly from Christ

¹³John H. Westerhoff, "Contemporary Spirituality Revelation," in Durka and Smith, p. 24.

Church's own wealthy store of traditions. It is also one of the earliest traditions of the church.

Before Rome had become thoroughly Christianized, the weeks before Easter were the time when candidates for baptism received vigorous instruction and training, with baptism on Easter Eve. St. Augustine describes the confirmands as "harshly scourged with rules and instructions."¹⁴

Christ Church follows this ancient Lenten emphasis of the early church, and has always recognized Lent as the season to prepare individuals for baptism and to challenge those who are already baptized to a reaffirmation of their baptismal vows.¹⁵ Six weeks of preparation for this act of faith culminate in a special ceremony which is part of the Great Vigil of Easter Eve. Due to this tradition, baptism was seen as a central theme for whatever project we developed at Christ Church.

A second theme grew directly out of our early discussions and emerged to a greater and greater degree as Lent progressed. Jon and I were both interested in exploring the concept of time artistically. Lent itself is a symbol for time. It is a six-week period of intentional preparation for Easter. From Ash Wednesday to Palm/Passion Sunday and then on into Holy Week, the

¹⁴Theodore J. Kleinhaus, The Year of the Lord (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1967), p. 62.

¹⁵Proposed Book of Common Prayer (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation and Seabury Press, c. 1977), pp. 304-305. (See Appendix.)

faithful are asked to journey together in an attitude of penitence and thereby explore the dimensions of prayer, fasting, and confession. Lent manifests a unique sense of time. Indeed, the English word Lent got its name from the folklore of the Germanic tribes. "'Lenten' is the same root as 'lengthen,' and stands for that time of the spring when the daylight does in fact lengthen."¹⁶

Anglican worship already recognizes this distinctive sense of time in two ways. First, there are changes in the liturgy (i.e., the "Gloria in excelsis" regularly used on Sundays is dropped). Secondly, there are changes in what people see. All crosses, pictures, and statues are veiled so that starkness and somberness visually reign in worship. For all these reasons, John and I recognized time as a theme that needed to be explored during Lent.

A third theme grew out of a careful study of the lectionary lessons for Lent 1981.¹⁷ All the gospel readings (with the exception of the first Sunday in Lent) were taken from the Gospel of John. These scriptures function as "signs" in John's gospel, stories that symbolically point to Jesus as the Christ. Since scripture is a key element in worship, especially worship tied into the

¹⁶Kleinhans, p. 65.

¹⁷Proposed Book of Common Prayer, pp. 894-895.
(See Appendix.)

liturgical seasons, my task as a liturgical artist naturally became an exploration of these Johannine "signs" and their affiliated Old Testament and Epistle scriptures. Indeed, it is an artist's delight to be asked to "symbolize" what is already "symbol."

The fourth theme had more to do with the form the project would take than its actual content. Jon had long had an interest in graphic art and lettering. He encouraged me to explore the power of letters and words to be both the bearers of a message and the message itself. He suggested that the printed word or letter may be the most appropriate visual art form for our contemporary multimedia culture. Words and letters have a power to arrest our attention. Words and letters have the power of nuance. Words and letters can function as the basic building block for design. Under Jon Olson's influence, I was inspired to explore a new medium that had great potential for me as a liturgical artist specializing in fabrics. A fascination with playing with words and letters became an underlying theme in many ways during Lent 1981.

Once these four themes had emerged as being of key importance to my Lenten project, decisions quickly followed about ways of exploring and interpreting these themes. Many possibilities had already been considered in the early discussions and it was also assumed that my

interest in textiles would somehow be put to use. However, nothing was totally conclusive until the themes were chosen. Flexibility had been built into the process and the project finally took total form.

First, I decided I would like to make a pair of abstract "tie-dye"¹⁸ banners. The first banner would be a response to the image of desert that was prevalent in the scripture lessons for the first several Sundays in Lent. This was particularly true of the Old Testament lessons and Matthew's story of the Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. The second banner would be created for the Easter Vigil Service and would respond to the theme of baptism. These banners were conceived of as "book ends" to each other. This "book-end" relationship was supported by the architecture of the sanctuary. (Indeed, the original idea for these banners came while I was standing in the building and examining it in light of the lectionary lessons and the baptism theme.) The building is a long, narrow rectangle with an altar and free-standing reredos at the west end, and a large stone baptismal font at the east end. Whereas the worshipping community would begin its Lenten journey focused on the altar and the

¹⁸The word "tie-dye" describes two stages of a craft concerned with fiber and fabric. First, one ties, binds, or bundles a piece of material. Secondly, this "tied-up" material is dyed. A pattern of dyed and undyed shapes is

and the "desert," it would arrive at the baptismal font and the "water" on Easter Eve. The two banners were envisioned as counterpoints, just as desert and water are counterparts.

A second decision about form emerged when I chose to create and/or compile literary materials such as poetry, scripture, and short devotional prose. These would be used to create a series of weekly meditation sheets. These sheets (intended to be 13½" x 4½" in size) would be attached to the worship order and function as a verbal and visual commentary on the lectionary lessons. Such sheets would also allow for some interesting exploration of graphic design and lettering. The possibilities inherent in the interaction of scripture and reflections on scripture intrigued me.

The third artistic endeavor was to be the largest of the three and the original idea came from Father Olson. He suggested a set of four wooden shadowboxes that would hang on the long south wall of the sanctuary. (The north wall consists of sliding glass windows that open out onto a grassy courtyard and a view of the San Gabriel mountains). These 3' x 6' boxes would frame the eight questions found in the Baptismal Covenant of the Episcopal

thus created. See Anne Maile, Tie and Dye Made Easy (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., c 1971).

Church. These are questions used at the time of baptism. Furthermore, these boxes were intended to address the theme of time in that they would grow and change throughout the season of Lent. Each week new overlays of words, scripture, and graphic design done on organdy (an almost transparent fabric) would be placed in front of the Covenant questions. Such additions were made possible by means of stretching and stapling the organdy to the inner walls of the boxes. The use of organdy would allow the viewer to read words through words. These ever-changing boxes were the three-dimensional equivalents of the meditation sheets I eventually developed.

Two final decisions were also made during this pre-Lent period that need to be mentioned. Father Olson volunteered to be responsible for recruiting parish members to work with me on the boxes. I decided that the meditation sheets and the two banners would be my responsibility, although I was free to invite others to help or co-create if I wanted. At the same time it was conclusively decided that something new would be created for each Sunday, and Saturdays would become work days at the Parish, allowing this to happen.

LENT

The following section offers a first-hand account of the artistic endeavor that took place at Christ Church

Parish during Lent 1981. A personal journal was kept during this period, and all notes and direct entries are taken from this record. Where necessary, I have filled in additional background and transitional material so that the reader is able to follow the artistic venture at Christ Church through its distinctive stages. Pictures of each week's accomplishments and reductions of the actual meditation sheets precede the account of each week's work.

Ash Wednesday (March 4, 1981)

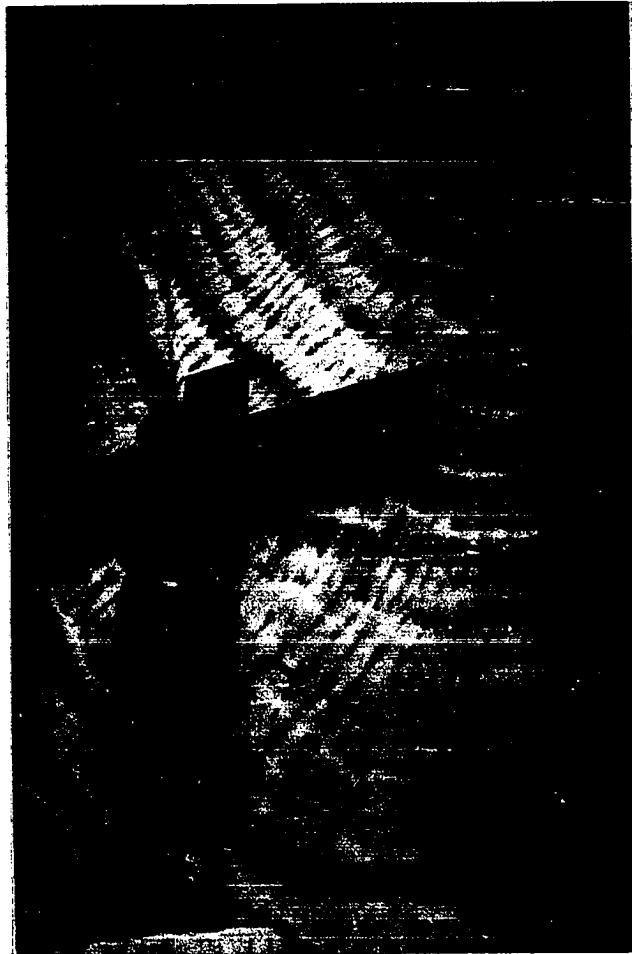
[Excerpt from my journal]

. . . I had no part to play in this service except to be one of the worshipping community which gathered on Wednesday evening to begin the Lenten season. The first banner won't be hung until Saturday.

We began the service with a long period of silence and private reflection or prayer. There was very little light in the sanctuary. The altar, most of the statues, and the large painting behind the baptismal font were draped in beige-colored cloth. All the brightness and decoration that had been Epiphany were gone, and a somber simplicity reigned.

The service made an important physical shift at the very end. For most of worship, the focus and action were up front. From the pews, we faced the altar and celebrated the Eucharist. However, as we left the service to file out into the night, the focus and action were completely reversed. We were marked with ashes as Jon stood in front of the baptismal font. I wonder if anyone else noticed

this altar-to-font movement. It will show up again, of course. Tonight we experienced the basic movement of the whole Lenten season. If we rehearse the movement enough times, maybe each one of us will get the point.



SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE DESERT
COMPILED FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
BY PAULA LUERA-WHITMORE

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The desert's life is in
its corners and pockets.
Far way to the horizon
is waste and space,
wilderness.
Close up
in the crevice
is color and life.
Arid is not
dead
nor rocky, lifeless.
Look closely at your desert.

The Most High found them
wandering through the desert,
a desolate, wind-swept wilderness.
He protected them and cared for them,
as he would protect himself.
Like an eagle teaching its young to fly,
catching them safely on its spreading wings,
the Lord kept Israel from falling.
The Lord alone led his people
without the help of any foreign god.
Deuteronomy 32

Between the twin vastnesses of the desert floor and the desert sky, persons see nothing but themselves and become aware of the Other, the Thou, who is revealed in the silence. Thus Ernest Renan claims that monotheism -- belief in one God -- was born in desert vastness.

Renan may have overstated the case. Experiencing the desert as a place is no more mystical than experiencing the Arctic waste or the Atlantic Ocean, swelling and falling endlessly, or the nothingness of space 30,000 feet above the earth which we traverse occasionally by jet.

Yet the desert as a place and an experience is at the heart of Judaeo-Christian history. The Israelites, our root-people, could never forget that they were a desert people: "In the Lord's presence you will recite these words, 'My ancestor was a wandering Aramean'."

While the God of Israel was not a reflection of the desert, the desert was the scene where persons encountered God.

MOSES: In the wilderness of Horeb he encountered God. A burning bush called for his attention, and he heard the voice of God announcing the deliverance of Israel. Israel could live only by the saving will of Yahweh.

DESERT LESSON: Moses was reluctant to accept the saving will of Yahweh. But in the desert there is no room for compromise. You decide to live or die -- that's the decision of the desert.

THE EXODUS: On the way out of Egypt, Israel encountered God in the desert of Sinai. In the cities of Canaan and the fields of Egypt, the Israelites might have been able to run or hide from Yahweh. But in that barren atmosphere, that raw and harsh setting, there was no place to hide.

DESERT LESSON: In the desert there is no place to which one can run.

THE COVENANT: "I will be your God and you will be my people" was the covenant formed in the desert. Israel might go on her own in the wilderness, but she would perish. Survival was dependant upon God.

DESERT LESSON: God must be accepted on his terms. The terms are total submission to his will.

ELIJAH: Israel had forsaken the covenant, torn down the altars to God, put to death the prophets, so Elijah went back to the desert. Elijah ran to Horeb where Moses had found God. At Horeb, Elijah was confronted with the harsh cruelty of the wilderness: earthquake, wind, and fire. God was not in the convulsions of the elements, but in the barely perceptible movement of the air -- a still, small voice.

DESERT LESSON: Elijah had to return to the desert to learn that God was no more in Horeb than in Israel. God is not limited to a certain place or time.

JOHN THE BAPTIST: Dressed in camel skin, eating locusts and honey, John affirmed the austere rigor of the desert. His person and message harmonized: "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand". John announced the greatest crisis in the history of Israel. He preached it in the desert.

DESERT LESSON: The people could hear the announcement only if they left their homes and businesses, broke their daily routine, and went into the desert where it was being spoken.

JESUS: The new Moses and the new Israel first went to the desert before he began to announce the Gospel of the kingdom. His forty days of testing in the wilderness parallel Israel's forty years in the desert.

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DESERT LESSON: The desert is a place of testing.

PAUL: A city man, Paul retired to the desert of Arabia after his convulsion. For three years he remained in solitude before assuming his mission among the Gentiles.

DESERT LESSON: Paul could not understand or accept the full meaning of his vocation until he retired to the traditional source of spiritual guidance and strength, the place where persons meet God.

I have never seen the desert
but very well I know
the heat of misspent passion
and the desolation
of a grain of sand.
And though it is less often,
I have also stood
with thirsty soul
lifted into the rain
and burst into
blooms of amazed
thanksgiving.

Therese D. Pusateri

After Jesus was baptized and heard the voice from heaven which said, "This is my own dear Son," he was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the Evil-one.

Decisions about who we are (and what we do because of who we are) involve eternal forces. Something beyond space and time presses upon us for these decisions.

We are not talking about a fork in the road, a place where a flip of a coin would make the decision for us. More is involved than just a choice of road. Destination will be determined by our understanding of ourselves.

In classic religious writing, these tests are called temptations. Many of us have diluted the meaning by sticking a temptation-label on cherry pie or moments of leisure.

The decisions about life which Jesus faced in his wilderness experience guide us in our testing.

Jesus decided against the immediate satisfaction of his desires. He yielded to a dependence on God for nurturing. Will we try to feed ourselves? Do we see ourselves as self-sufficient?

Jesus also decided against evading personal responsibility. He would not give a dramatic sign of God's special favor by jumping off the Temple. Do we take responsibility for our choices? Are there signs of God's special favor toward us which we are tempted to exploit?

Jesus also refused to let power prevail. Service to others, not exercising power over them, becomes possible when God alone is worshipped. What will we do for the sake of power? Do we find our self-esteem through the exploitation of others?

After Jesus made his decisions, "angels came and helped him". We, too, can have a sense of contentment when we make the fundamental decision to keep life open to God. When God alone is worshipped and adored, when God alone nurtures and guides, we find life has meaning. Struggles against the dark forces become transformed into banquets of healing fellowship with others who also adore God.

Mary Ruth Coffman

¹⁹ This is the first of a series of meditation sheets prepared to accompany Sunday morning worship bulletins at Christ Church. Most quotations taken from other authors are reproduced from Alive Now, 6-11 (1976-1981).

Notes from the First Week in Lent: The Desert Banner

Thursday, March 6, 1981

[Excerpt from my journal]

We finished the first banner tonight. I am pleased and surprised by it. It was intended to be a purely technical piece, an experiment with a certain method of tie-dye binding that was new to me. I should know by now that when one experiments with something new, the results are never totally predictable. It is by far the most subtle piece of banner work I have ever done. . . .

Allene Parker had expressed an interest in learning tie-dye, so I enlisted her help for this part of the Lenten project. I needed more than one pair of hands with such a big piece of muslin. We worked together for three evenings in the kitchen of the Disciples Seminary Foundation lunchroom. We had to get special permission for this. Already this liturgical project has become a community affair.

[Excerpt from journal]

Today I also handed over to Jon all the scripture and poetry I had collected for the first meditation sheet. Jon had volunteered to type it for me. I'll be interested in what he does with it.

Saturday, March 7, 1981

I took the banner to Christ Church and we put it in place behind the altar. This so-called launching turned

out to be a special event. First, it involved Pat Blanco, a parishioner I had not met before. Jon said of that meeting, "It was a good contact with a parishioner who has an important 'in.'" Time was to prove Jon far more correct than he dreamed. With Pat working alongside us, we managed to hand that eight-foot banner and its blue backdrop with just two pair of scissors, a staple gun, and a shaky ladder. We became a "community" in that we shared a common task and a common bit of peril.

[Excerpt from journal]

Friday's decision to back the banner with a royal blue felt was a stroke of genius. The banner would have faded into the woodwork of the reredos without it. Indeed, that blue backdrop became the spark for new creativity. We were so excited by it that we took the remaining strip of felt and hung it in the center of the beige-colored drape covering the painting behind the font. The two ends of the sanctuary were immediately connected and balanced by that blue "racing stripe." When I stood in the center of the sanctuary looking toward the font, the blue strip led my eye up the back wall to the ceiling. From there it led along the ceiling until it made connections with the blue backdrop of the reredos. The blue backdrop then took over and led my eye down to the altar. The action was completed by the single aisle of the sanctuary in which I was standing. It led my eye back from the altar to the font. In other words, the strip was the finishing touch that created a continuous visual circle running the full length of the building. It's exhilarating! One can

almost imagine the "spirit" racing around the loop in joyful celebration. . . .

A third discovery was also made that day. Once the banner was hung, the three of us realized that the gentle curve in the tie-dye pattern balanced with the curve in the body of Christ that stood in front of it. This curve was totally unintended for I had originally planned a perfect diagonal pattern. As it turned out, the curves in the crucifix statue and the curves in the banner worked together to create a subtle sense of ease and bending. Jon commented, "I wouldn't have liked it without that curve. . . ." The way the light was thrown on the banner also confirmed my choice of colors.

[Excerpt from journal]

In the banner I see sandstone, which is my image of desert. I also see the flesh tones of the Christ who journeyed there for our sake.

Sunday, March 8, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

I could have shot Jon. . . . The meditation sheets were fine except for two things. He forgot to use the half sheet I wanted, and worst of all, he put my name at the very top of it. . . . He also introduced me to the congregation at the close of worship. . . . I know he wanted to be kind, but it's important that I remain fairly anonymous in the congregation so I can observe and interact more freely. I feel like Jon gave me too much press. Indeed

I feel acutely embarrassed. . . . Next week, I'll try to do as much of the work on the meditation sheet at home as possible. In this way, I'll have more control and also the burden won't rest on him. I just wish I had a fancy typewriter like his. All those various letter sizes are fantastic. . . .

Thursday, March 12, 1981

Jon shared today the following two reactions to the banner.

[Excerpt from journal]

(Reaction #1)

Parishioner: "Gee, that's nice. . . . What's it a picture of?"

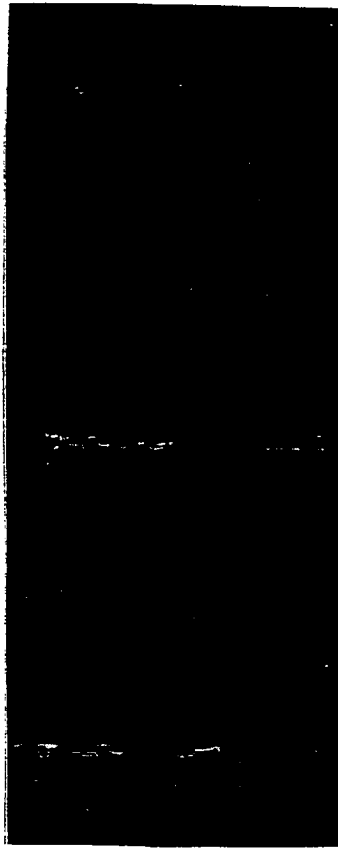
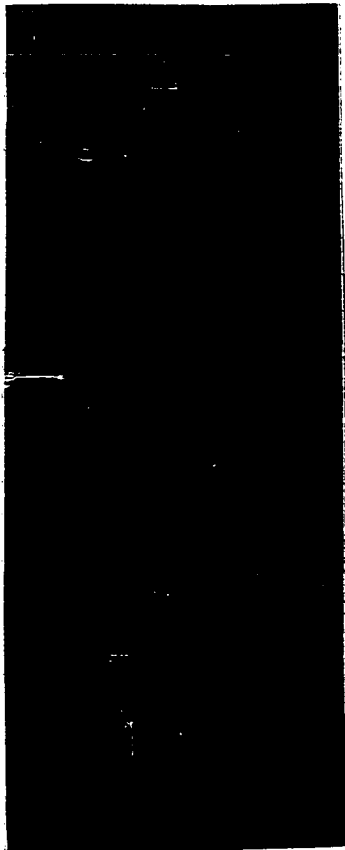
Jon: "It's a piece of tie-dye. It just happened."

Parishioner: "I wish things would happen that way for me."

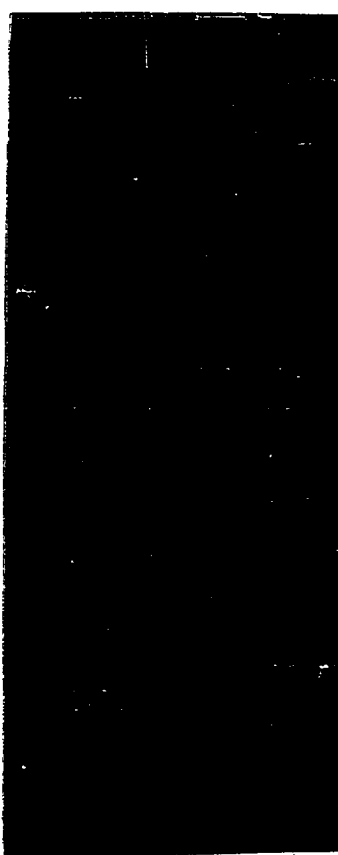
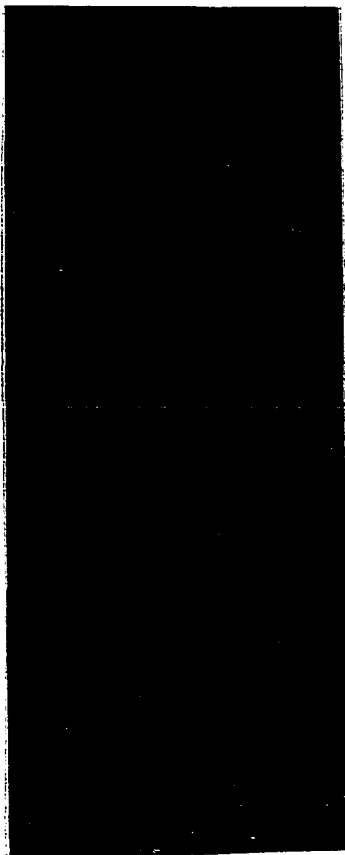
(Reaction #2)

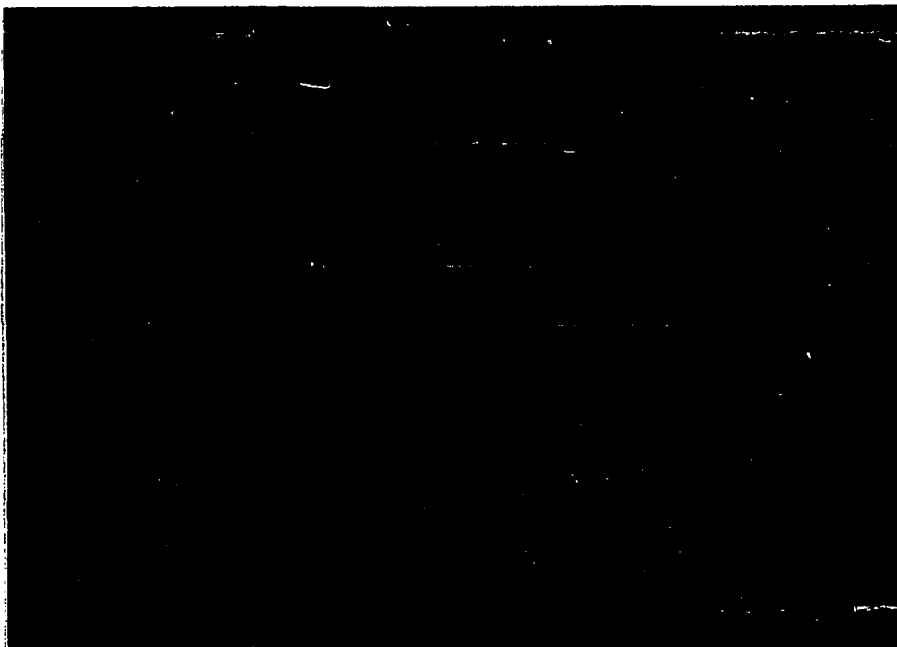
Another parishioner studied it in silence for the longest time. She looked at it from all angles. Finally she concluded, "It's a sea-shell."

In such reactions as these shared by Jon, I find the ultimate critique of art. Art is good when it brings people to life. Art has a chance at "goodness" when people live with it.

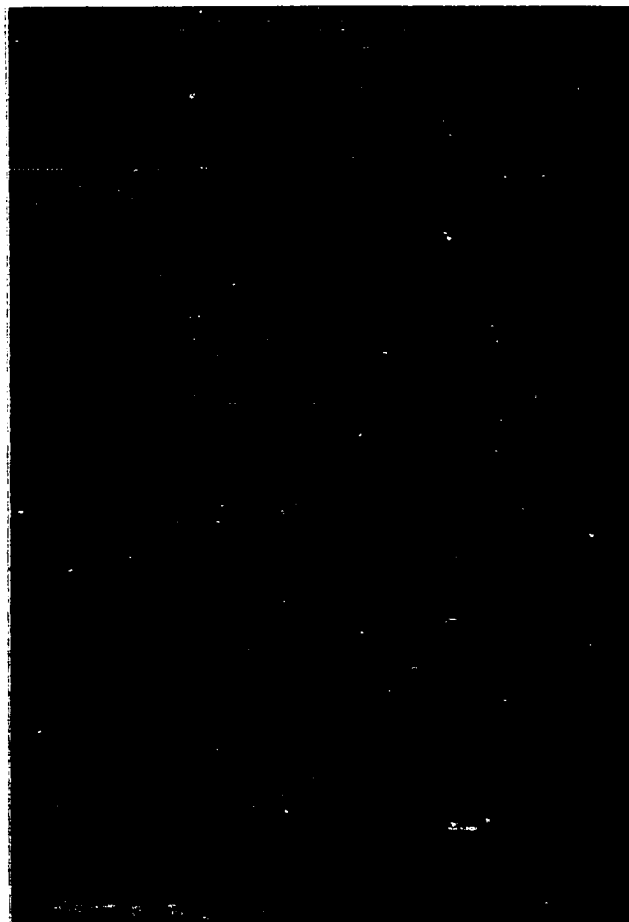


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Notes from the Second Week of Lent:
The Boxes Are Begun

My journal for this week contains the following undated theological reflections by Jon and me on the Call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-8). This was the Old Testament lesson for the Second Sunday in Lent. I share them here because these reflections became the ground of my second meditation sheet and one of the starting points for the boxes.

God has said everything is safe. You will find a Shechem wherever you go. . . . Indeed, the future is never totally unfamiliar because the self is never totally unfamiliar. . . . New birth is something in our past; it has already happened. Therefore, new life means dying to the infantile myths. No terrain is foreign. There are no watertight rules, and no dragons. There is just the future, and always the one we meet is God.

Friday, March 13, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

Tonight I created the second of the meditation sheets. I had a box of magazine cut-outs--all phrases and words. I sorted, played, and eventually created a simple, and yet an effective collage. "Promises, promises" seemed like the perfect theme, for it seems to fulfill our appointed Old Testament lesson. Even though we are still in the desert, I have a growing sense that we are also beginning the trek out. . . .

Saturday, March 14, 1981

I remember this as an exciting, and at the same time, disquieting, day. It was the day we were to begin the boxes, and the boxes were the part of the project at Christ Church that I felt the most apprehension about. The feeling was well founded when I reflect back on it. First, I was going to be working with a new art form. Type letters for printing, organdy to print on, and graphic design were all things I had had little experience with. Second, I was supposed to facilitate the artistic process for a group of parish volunteers I hardly knew. Third, I did not have as strong a vision for these boxes as I wanted to have. At that point, the boxes still belonged more to Jon than to me. I arrived on Saturday morning, supplies in hand, wondering what would happen.

We had set a 9:00 a.m. starting time; by 9:30 a.m. we had seven volunteers. This is too many when direction is required, and direction on my part was definitely needed. It was obvious that some of the volunteers had artistic experience, while others did not. Some confusion about what persons should be doing existed until I put Allene Parker to work. I asked her to use her skills in calligraphy, and write out the eight baptismal vows found in the Book of Common Prayer, two for each box. Her paper, in

this case, was really a piece of muslin cut to fit the box.

Once Allene began, an assembly-line fell into place. Allene would write the questions, Pat would embellish them with gold spray paint, the young husband and wife tried their hand with Jon's extensive collection of old type-set letters, and Linda Nichols and Jon worked off to the side constructing the wooden boxes. I moved in and out as participant/observer in all these activities, making suggestions or giving directions when necessary. A couple of times during the morning it became clear that additional supplies were needed such as wood, different colored ink pads, and spray paint. Various individuals took the lead in going out to buy them.

At noontime we were down to four workers: Jon, Linda Nichols, Pat (whom I have already mentioned), and me. It was then and only then that the creative process started to really take hold. For example, we turned to the scriptures and the meditation sheet I had created. This helped to focus our detail work for the rest of the day. "Promises, promises" showed up in the form of a partial graphic cross, while certain key words from lines out of the Baptistismal Covenant were singled out for special graphic treatment. We also did a great deal more bouncing of ideas off each other. We made suggestions back and forth, and when Jon first suggested it was time to quit, we discussed that

for a while as well.

The difference between the larger group in the morning and the smaller group in afternoon seems to have been this issue of dialogue. Creativity really begins with dialogue. Art is an incarnate form of dialogue. Three or four people can still dialogue together, both verbally and nonverbally. In a larger group, the possibility of dialogue begins to break down. It is impossible for all the members of the group to interact, and opportunities for mutual learning and inspiration are lost. A larger group is thus hindered in its creativity, and naturally tends to fall back on a production approach to the arts under the instruction or guidance of one or two leaders. Production is not a bad thing. There are times and places when it is very appropriate. However, it should not be confused with the artistic process.

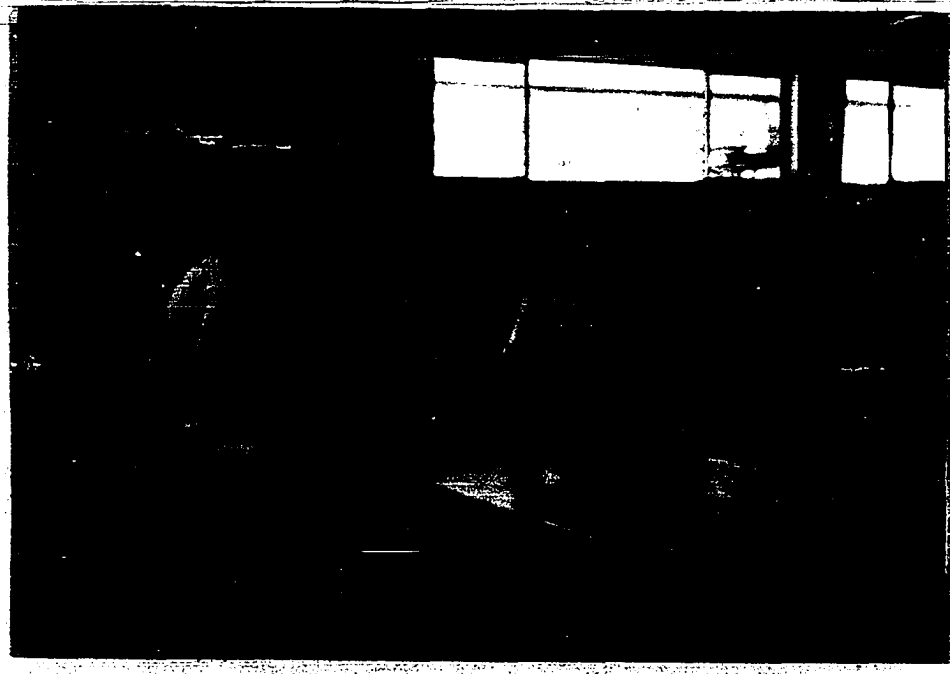
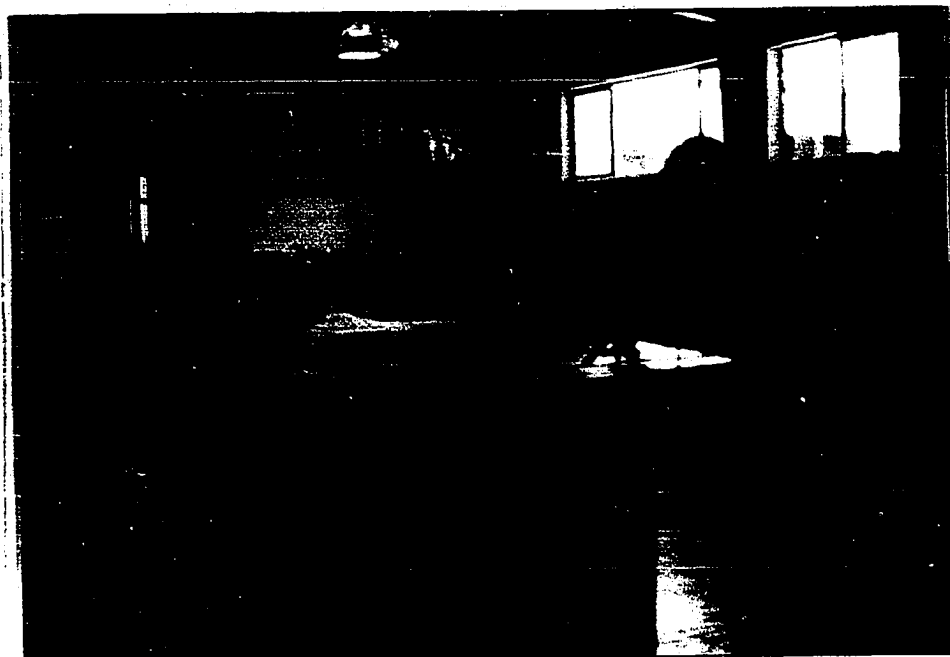
We ended the afternoon by stapling the muslin to the backs of the boxes and hanging them on the south wall of the church.

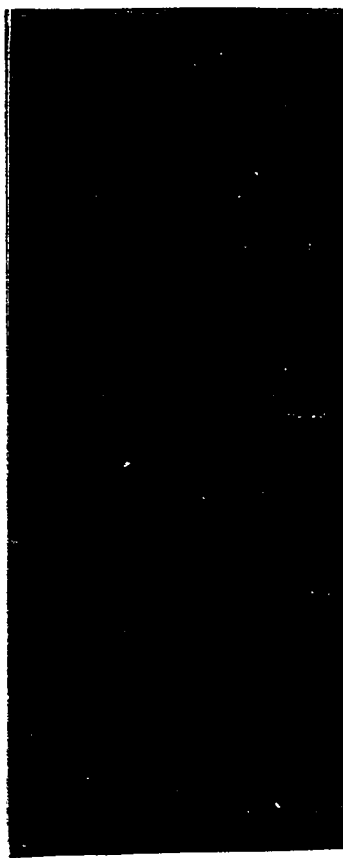
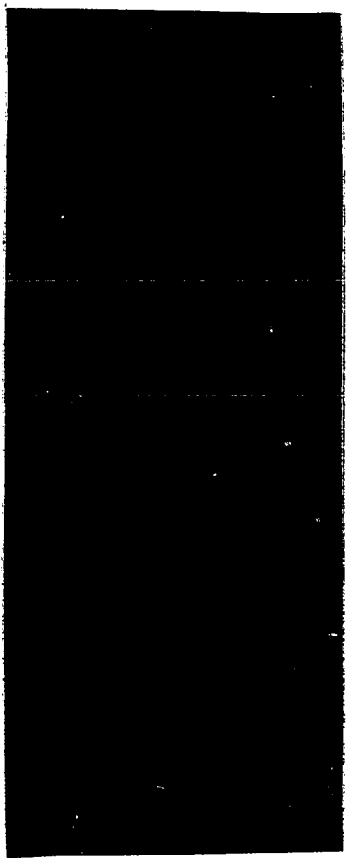
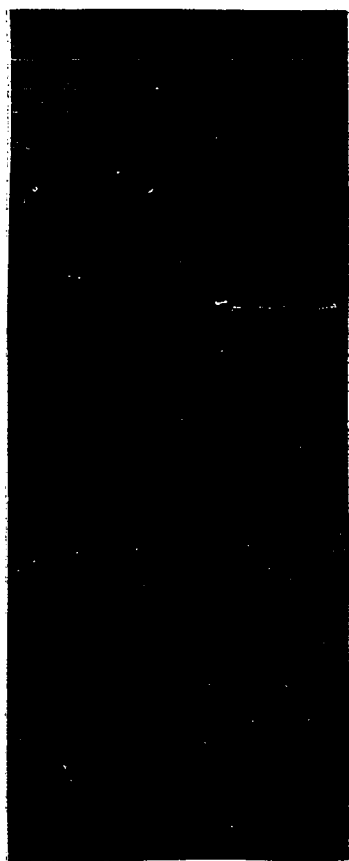
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It is the time of the breaking of many waters
and of the shaking of foundations
It is the day of blood on the moon
and other unbearable calamities
It is the hour when sin strikes out against their own
and the generations are set on edge

All things are at an end
Or a beginning
Corpsed
Or struggling to be born
It is a time for God
Let the people gather
And let us
Sing
And bow down
Praise
And pray
Let what is to be
Begin
John Killinger

AND MOSES CRACKED THE ROCK . . .
AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN DREW FROM THE WELL . . .
AND PAUL SAID:

SUFFERING PRODUCES ENDURANCE
ENDURANCE PRODUCES CHARACTER
CHARACTER PRODUCES HOPE . . .
AND HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT
US.

Our God, creator of
the dance of life,
giver of bread and
wine and joy,
redeemer of all that
is lonely and
fearful and tight.
We thank you for this
day and for your
presence with us
right now.

Shake us, move us,
prod us, O God,
that we may be enabled
to bring something
new out of the parched
life around us.
May we be water-
bearers for thee,
faithful even in the
face of our dark needs,
to the end that we may
be opened to the
fierce and
transforming power of
your love. We pray in
the Name of Jesus the
Christ, who endured
human thirst that we
might taste the water
welling up to eternal
life. Amen

While living in the risk-filled wilderness of freedom, the Israelites grew frightened. They had escaped from bondage in Egypt, fled their captivity, but were now unsure what to do with their freedom. They began to grow weary and restless with their vagabond lifestyle. "Why have you brought us out here, Moses? How are we tired and hungry. At least we were safe in Egypt. How can we be sustained in our freedom? The word of the freedom-giving God came back to them: 'I will give you enough food for each day, enough water to drink. I will sustain you out of the goodness of life in order to encourage your growth in freedom.'" Many of us have a lot of difficulty feeling quite right about just opening up our hands and having them filled with good things. We believe we are supposed to work hard and earn the good things of life. Many of the most satisfying experiences in life do require the freedom to struggle, work, and create. But the eschatological point of life is that we are given grace all along the way. In fact, God does offer us fresh supplies of grace daily, if we will but open our eyes to receive these gifts. Life is wonder-filled. Life is yes. Life is grace and peace. For those who will receive the gifts. Amen. H. Hughes

Notes from the Third Week of Lent:
The Boxes Continue to Take Shape

Thursday, March 19, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

Today I had another one of my weekly sessions with Jon. I am struck by the fact that we are talking less about theology and art in general, and more about our Lenten scripture and boxes in particular. We are also spending more time debriefing what is happening, which is very helpful. . . . This Sunday's lectionary lessons are intriguing. Moses cracks the rock (Exodus 17:1-7); Paul offers his statement about suffering, endurance, and hope not disappointing (Romans 5:1-11); and Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman and offers her living water (John 4:5-26, 30-42). There is an interrelatedness here that is provocative. I sense in all the passages a restlessness among the people. No one wants to remain in the desert a moment longer. . . . They are waiting for something to happen, really happen.

Jon Olson's comments about the lectionary lessons were particularly insightful that day:

God is faithless until the people grumble.
 It is not until we throw ourselves on God
 that God appears. . . .

Wandering always puts one under the jeopardy
 of dependence on God. We have no abiding
 place but God.

(In Exodus 17:1-7) . . . the absolute dependence of the people on Yahweh is displayed. They have left Egypt where everything was available in exchange for a relationship of dependence.

It is possible that the basic holy life may be to wander. What else could the faithlessness of God be about, if not this? Perhaps that's why the cry "Back to the tents" became so important to some during the later monarchy of Israel.

Jon and I also worked together that day to finish the third meditation sheet. I needed his fancy typewriter, so he typed while I stood over his shoulder showing him what I wanted. It was very different than last week's sheet. It is both starker, and at the same time more complex. The poetry I chose and the juxtapositions we made at the typewriter all attempted to address the restlessness of our lectionary lessons. I am particularly pleased with the way in which I drew the three scriptures together in the following statement:

AND MOSES CRACKED THE ROCK. . .

AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN DREW FROM THE WELL. . .

AND PAUL SAID:

SUFFERING PRODUCES ENDURANCE
ENDURANCE PRODUCES CHARACTER
CHARACTER PRODUCES HOPE. . .
AND HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT

Saturday, March 21, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

There were three others besides me today: Pat, Linda, and Leanne, who is the mother of the baby that is to be baptized at the Easter Vigil Service. Although Leanne was new to the process, she was interested and eager in exploring the materials along with the rest of the "old hands." I suggested that we all go out for a long,

leisurely lunch to become better acquainted. That worked out well. The food and fellowship revitalized us. . . .

Some interesting transitions or phases occurred in the creative process that second Saturday we worked on the boxes. They are worth noting in some detail. First, we began in a playful and experimental mood. Each of us tried something new for the box or boxes we were working on. For example, Pat created spray-paint stencils and Leanne was fascinated with the graphic possibilities of John's type-set letters. During this period, the new meditation sheet and Sunday's scriptures were passed around for everyone's consideration.

However, playfulness soon gave way to seriousness. We allowed each other more "space" for concentrating on the artistic dialogue within ourselves. Light banter gave way to long periods of comfortable silence as we each focused on whatever it was we were working on. It was interesting to observe how each of us responded to the materials in different ways. Our unique personalities are easily distinguished by our use of materials.

Seriousness led into the third stage of our process together: tiredness. In this phase, we did some of our most creative work. There was more ease and cooperation with both materials and other participants. Our pace also accelerated, and our sense of community seemed

to be confirmed by our tiredness. There is something very intimate and honest about being tired together. We made more mistakes during this stage, but we also allowed these mistakes to stand. Good work occurs when people are tired. At the very end of the afternoon, an image arose from the midst of our creative tiredness that was to have great importance for our future work.

[Excerpt from journal]

A crucifix appeared in the fourth box at the very end of the day. Linda Nichols had been working on that box at the time. She carried it into the sanctuary and hung it on the wall. It is the box closest to the desert banner. The light coming through the sliding glass windows was such that the crucifix standing in front of the banner cast a distinct shadow. Linda was taken with this shadow and copied it onto a piece of yellow organdy. When she called me in to look at it I was awestruck. . . . She had responded to the very restlessness I discussed in my journal on Thursday. There, visualized for all of us, was the way out of the desert. . . . I left Christ Church that evening with an acute sense that the Spirit was brooding over the waters. . . . Something important was beginning to happen.

Friday, March 27, 1981

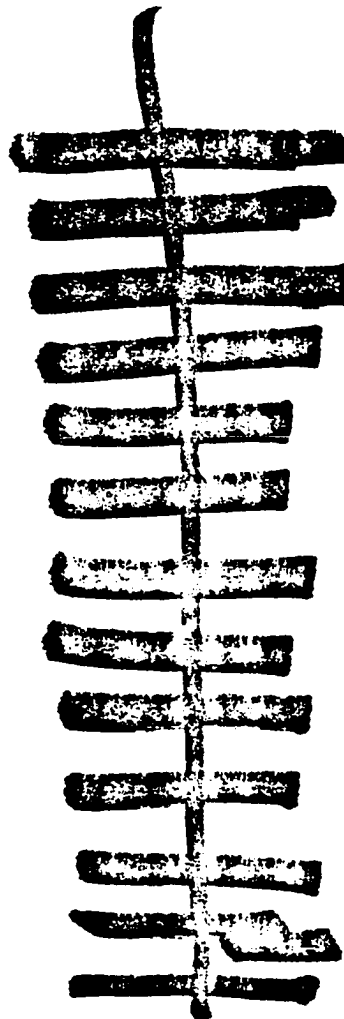
Jon and I met to reflect on the previous Saturday. My notes from that meeting consist of two comments from Jon and an interesting line drawing in the margin:

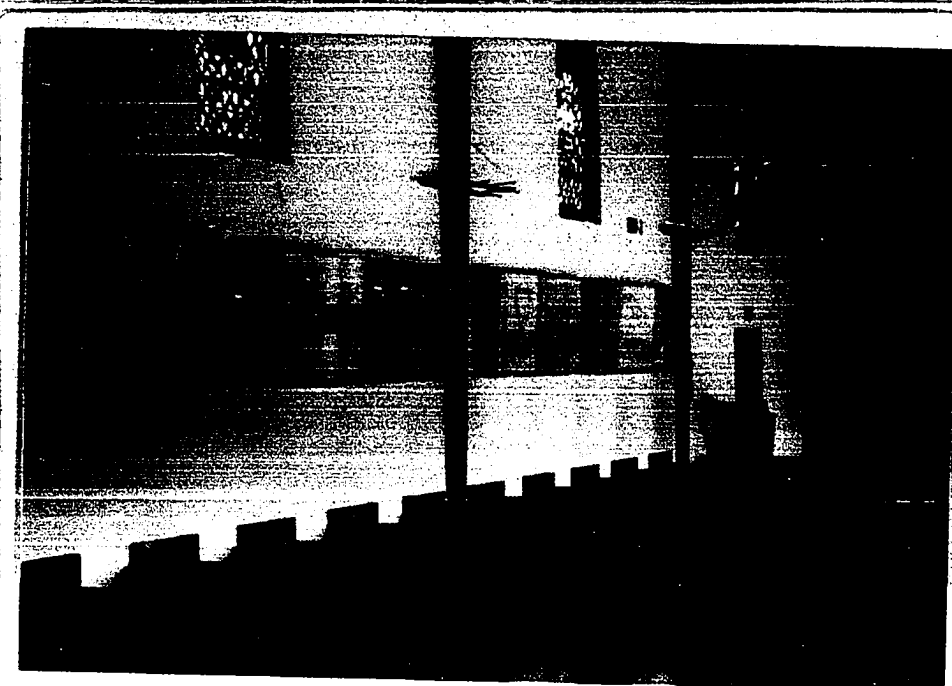
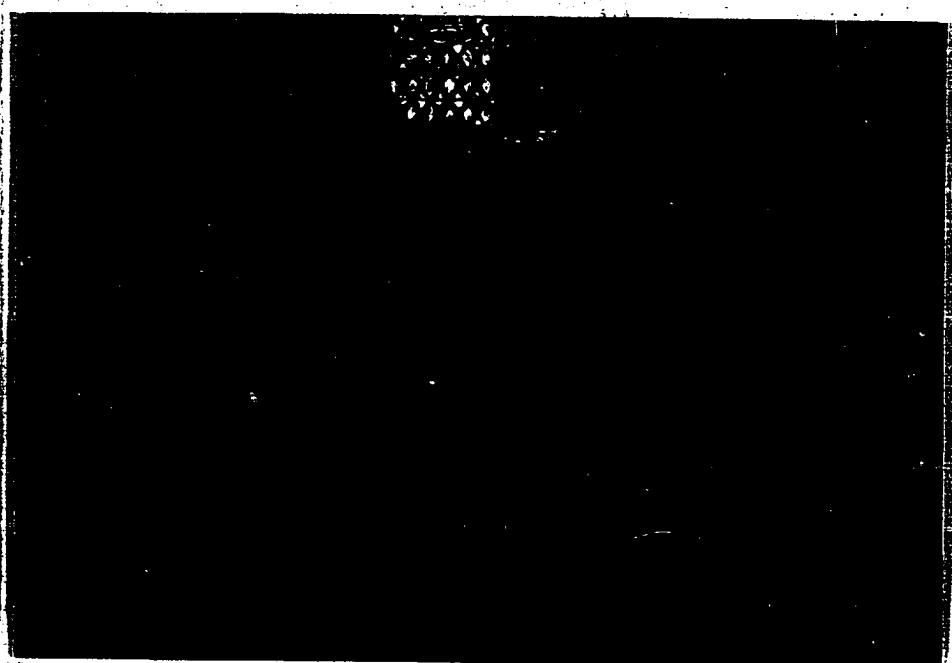
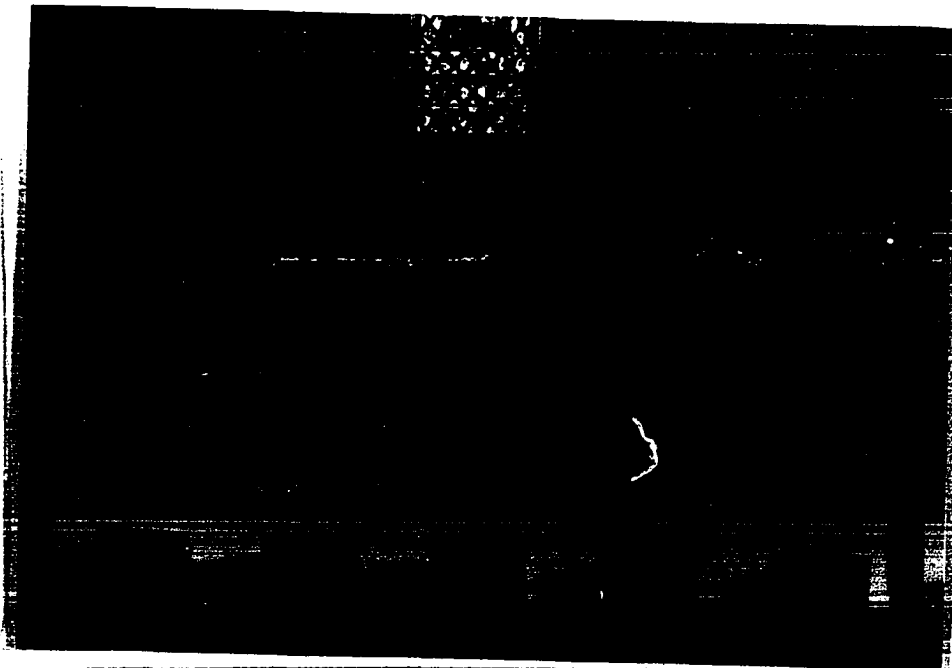
Don't be afraid to be pushed . . . good things come out of being pushed and working on the spur of the moment. Choice-making is always a part of the artistic process.

The role of the liturgical artist facilitating a creative process is to provide structures that enable the process to grow. . . .

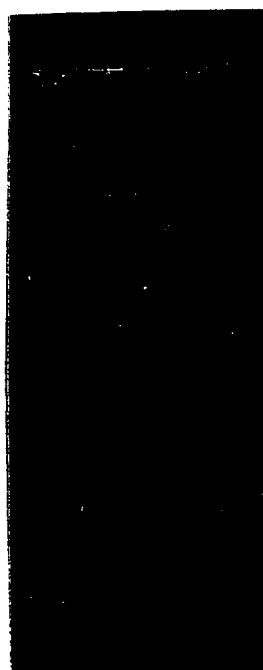
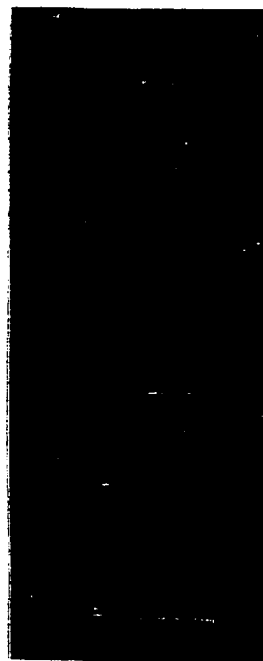
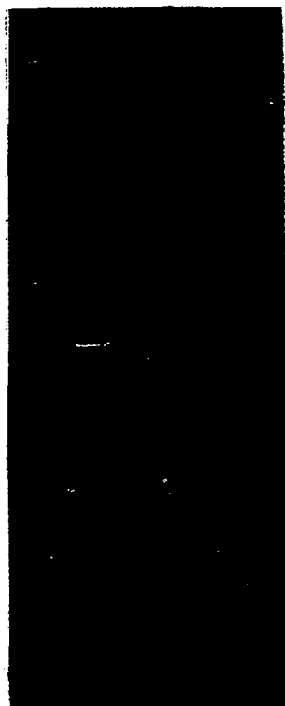
The line drawing looked like this. It was done in a red marker.

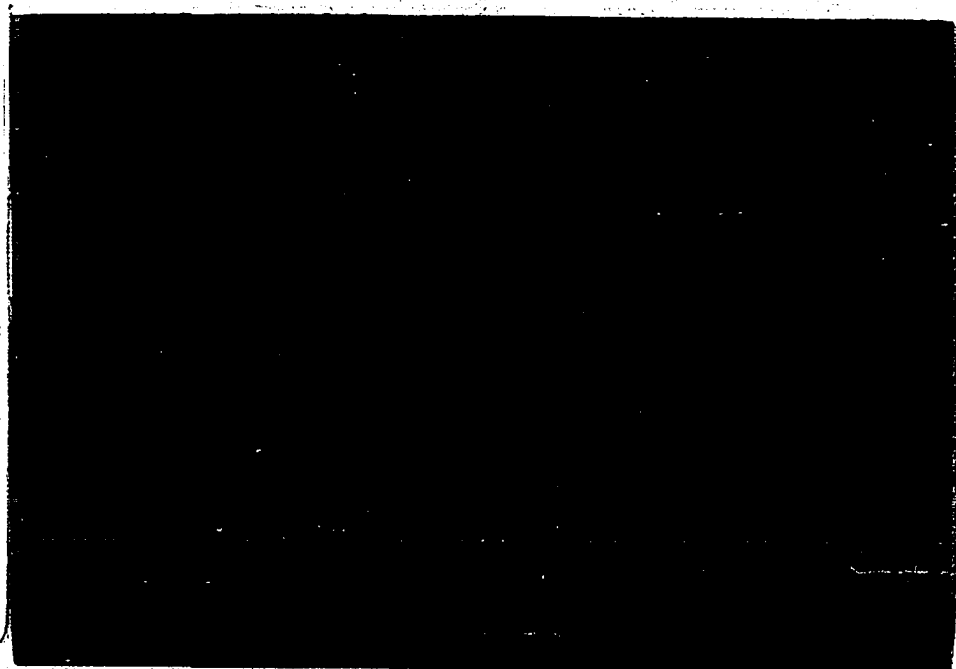
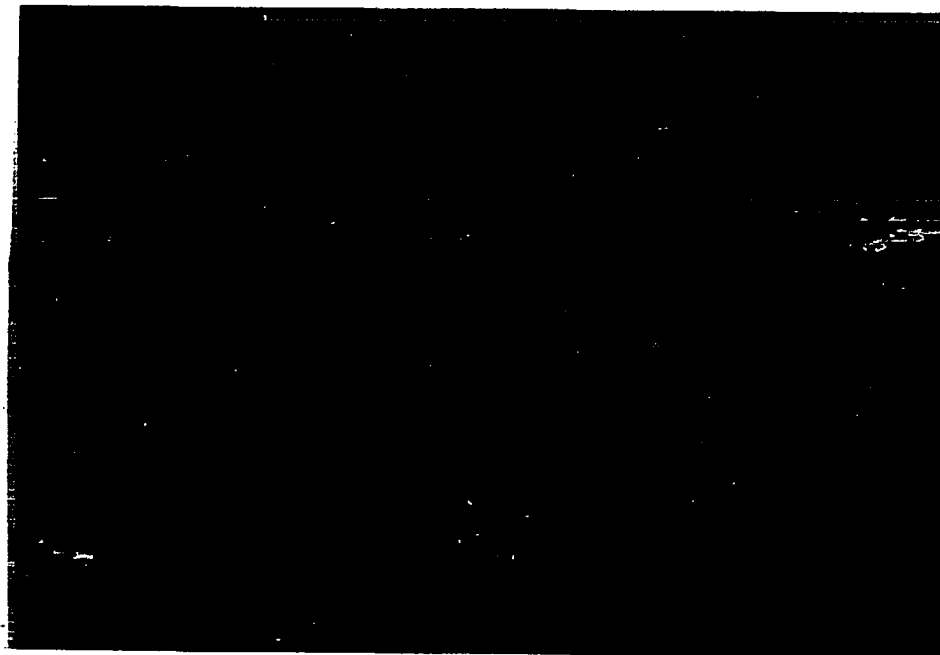
We will see it again.

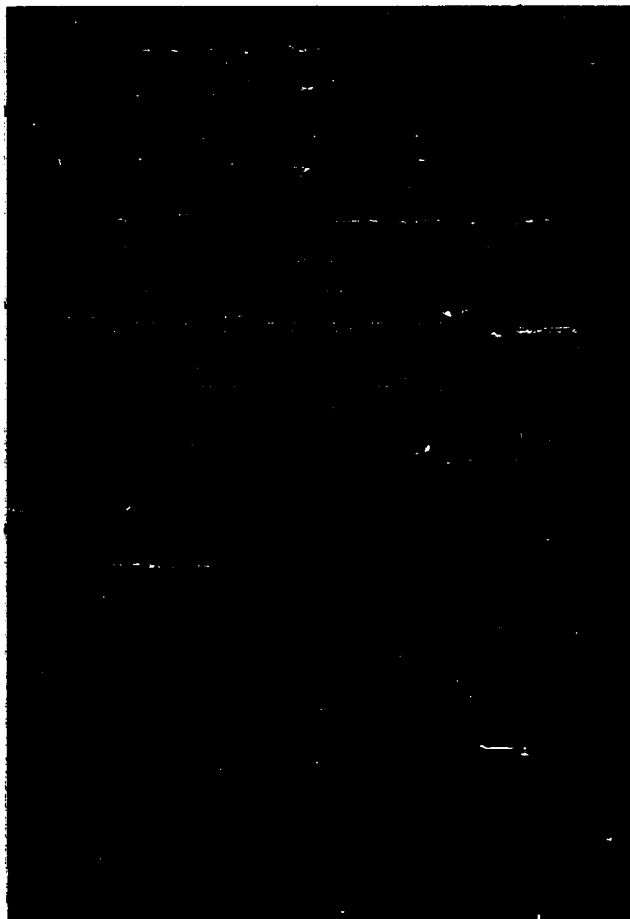


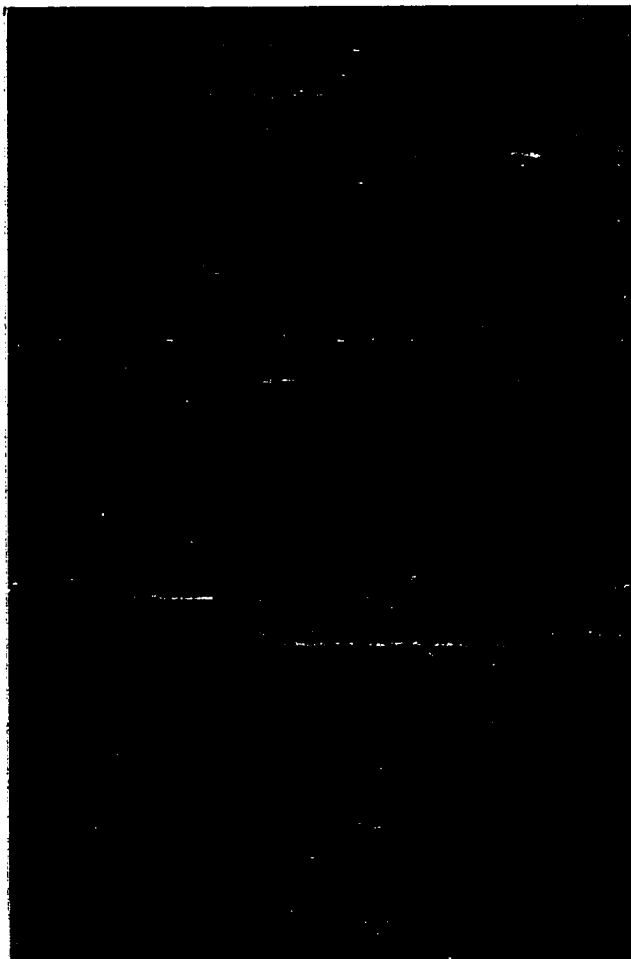














We may never see
the sights so close
to where we live.

Those who can
constantly see
a child's face
may not behold its
simple beauty.

Those who live
day by day
across the table
usually do not study
the other faces.

Daily we drive
past the trees
never noticing
the silent
unfolding of
a changing
mystery.

Bird song,
child's voice,
flute's melody,
whispering pine,
all are passing by.

We assume
there will always
be another time
to stop and
look and stay.

Somehow we
learn too late
that today
is the time
to see
feel
and remember.



LET US WALK AS THE CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT . . .

THE LORD SAID TO SAMUEL,
HOW LONG WILL YOU GRIEVE
OVER SAUL, SEEING THAT I
HAVE REJECTED HIM FROM
BEING KING OVER ISRAEL?
FILL YOUR HORN WITH OIL
AND GO . . . GOD DOES
NOT SEE AS MAN SEES;
MAN LOOKS AT APPEARANCES
BUT YAHWEH LOOKS AT THE
HEART.

With eyes focused
on our vision
we will gain
strength.
Looking back
we will wonder
how easily
we were bound.
In God's liberation
we discover life.
Richard L. Cookson

Travel light
into the future.
There is little need
for excess baggage.
Carefully chosen,
each extra
must be
multi-purpose
to serve our
new day.

YAHWEH SAID: COME, ANOINT
HIM, FOR THIS IS THE ONE.
AT THIS, SAMUEL TOOK THE
HORN OF OIL AND ANOINTED
HIM THEN AND THERE.

Breaking through
in unexpected way
is the truth we do not
want to discover.
Smashing the walls
carefully erected
is the reality
we so carefully have
hidden.
Shattering the egos
we so cleverly
have constructed
are feelings of
pain and suffering.

Who causes this?
Who dares to tamper
with lives so
carefully planned?

It is the very One
Who Is
Was
and ever shall Be
but not the same. R.L.C.

THE CHILDREN OF DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT NEW SIGHT . . . 128

Notes from the Fourth Week of Lent:
The Boxes Take on a Life of Their Own

Saturday, March 28, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

By a fluke, the whole course of boxes changed today. . . . We were all tired when we arrived and so we were slow in starting. (The pizza did save the day. It raised our sugar levels and allowed us to keep up our pace.) We each worked on our respective boxes; Linda on Box #4, Pat on Box #3, I worked on Box #1 and Box #2. I have ended up with these two boxes partly by default, for the other two had already claimed theirs. However, today I began to think of them as mine. . . . Linda set our pace by sharing with us an idea she had for a large graphic-art eye. This coincided with my already completed meditation sheet which focused on "seeing in a new way." With this inspiration from Linda and the sheet, we were off and running. Pat worked on an elaborate wordy piece straight from the Epistle lesson (The children of darkness . . . [Ephesians 5:1-14]). Linda worked on her bold, graphic "eye" (The man born blind . . . [John 9:1-13, 28-38]). I settled on a half-circle "sun" of poetry taken from the meditation sheet and the Old Testament lesson (The call of David . . . [I Samuel 16:1-13]). Linda is definitely bolder than either Pat or I in laying claim to these boxes in a technical sense. I think this reflects her experience as a photographer and art major. Experience leads to greater trust in one's artistic sense. Pat had to leave at 5:00 p.m. . . . which left just Linda and me. At that point, I had added a strip of red organdy to the bottom of Box #1 as an interweave. Linda liked it, and

suggested we do the same for the other three. We finished Box #1 and Box #3 first, stretching a straight red strip through both. As I set up Box #2, I had to run the red strip "off the page," so to speak. The decision was, at first, a purely practical one. I couldn't weave the red strip through the existing organdy overlays in the right half of the box. However, as we studied the effect, the whole project began to take on the "feel" of a Japanese wrapping or kimono. . . . Linda and I became very excited by what we saw happening. We left Box #2 as it was, and together we draped the last red strip in Box #4. We draped it so that it ran behind the crucifix. Standing back from the four, we realized something extremely significant had just taken place. The red strip had unified all four boxes . . . the red strip conjured up the image of a scourging whip . . . the red strip had become a "path" out of the wilderness as Isaiah promised. . . . We had created a very exciting statement about sight and seeing.

When I look back on that day, I can see clearly that what took place was not merely a fluke. Many elements went into what appears to have just happened. First, it was the third week of the boxes. We had been playing with them for a long time. We had begun to develop a sense of what needed to happen in regard to them. Secondly, the actual form of the boxes had begun to inspire us. The possibilities inherent in the technique were increasingly evident. For example, we were working that day on a third layer of organdy overlay. When these overlays were installed, the boxes became three-dimensional in depth. We

could read words through words. We could ask questions and find answers underneath and on top of the question. Foolishness and parable were becoming increasingly possible by means of layered juxtaposition. Furthermore, with the additions of the horizontal red strip in our so-called shadow boxes, our focus in direction expanded. Whereas we had been hanging our panels from top to bottom, we began that day to stretch them from side to side as well. This almost doubled the dimensional quality. Thirdly, a core group of workers had solidified by this time. There were three of us who were now permanent staff. This permanent staff status was apparent in the sense of territoriality that manifested itself. Each of us had her own boxes. We still made suggestions to each other and worked to some degree on all the boxes, but each box belonged in a special way to one person (i.e., Linda's crucifix and my red strip). Fourth, the fact that we had red organdy on hand was due to a decision I had made the day before. As artistic director, it was my responsibility to keep the necessary supplies on hand. Although Lent is traditionally a somber-color season, I had opted that day to buy a fuller range of colors for the boxes, including red. Finally, it is clear from the way we worked with the lectionary lessons and the meditation sheets, that our real agenda had become theological. An ability to do theology;

an ability to integrate scripture, tradition, and experience was now a necessary prerequisite for working on the boxes.

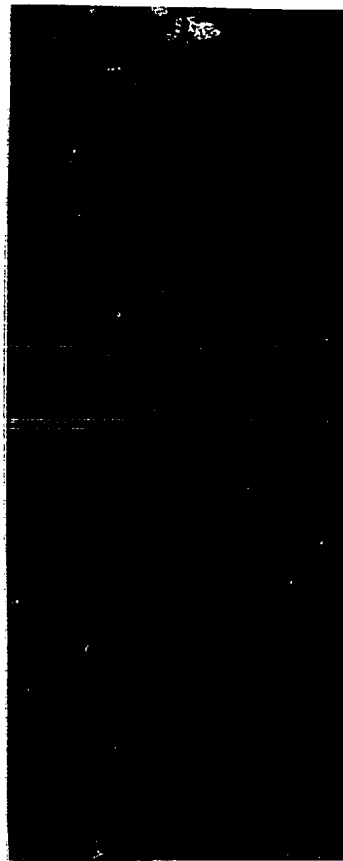
Nowhere is this theological agenda clearer than in the episode which occurred that same Saturday, mid-morning. We had a drop-in visitor, only recently related to Christ Church, who wanted to be part of our artistic process. This person had not been part of our endeavor before, and from the start did not appear to be particularly interested in blending with what we were doing. Instead of working with the boxes as they were evolving, or reading the resource material, or asking questions, this person sat down and created some organdy panels based on his own agenda. The two agendas did not really mesh. I had to intervene eventually, and although we used these panels, I did not allow them to be placed within the boxes in such a way as to disrupt what was already happening. Jon commented later that this episode in the life of the boxes clarified who was selected-in and who was selected-out. Theological astuteness had evolved as a criterion for working on the boxes.

Sunday morning, March 29, 1981

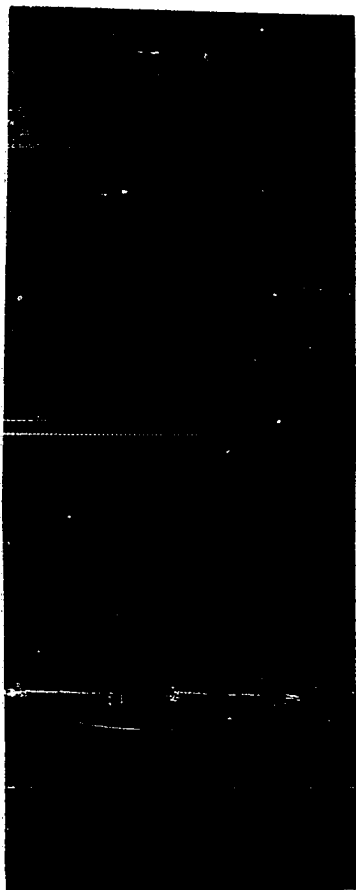
[Excerpt from journal]

I can see now that yesterday was the turning point in the process. . . . It has happened again, as it always

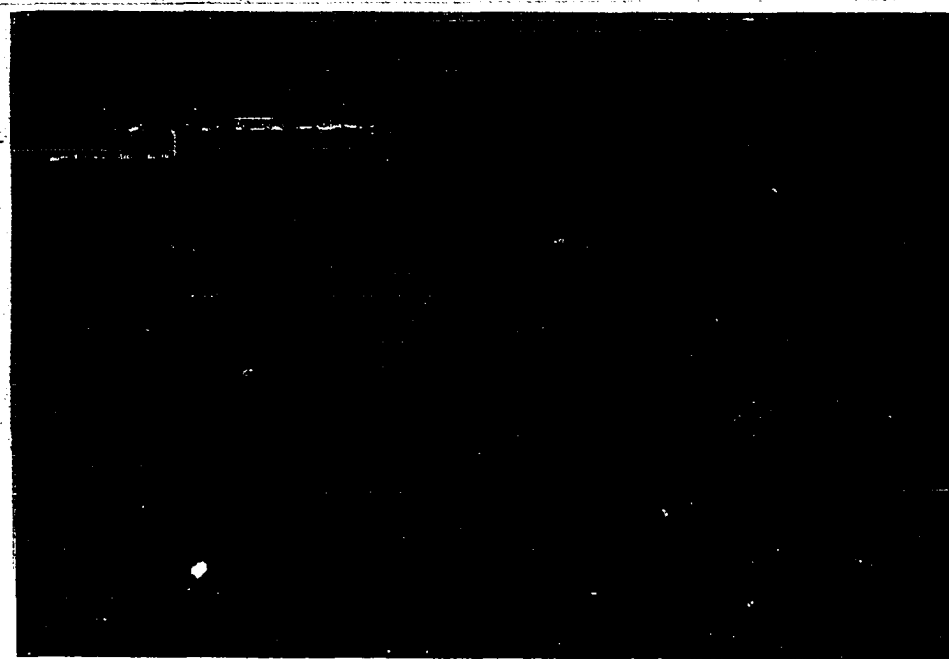
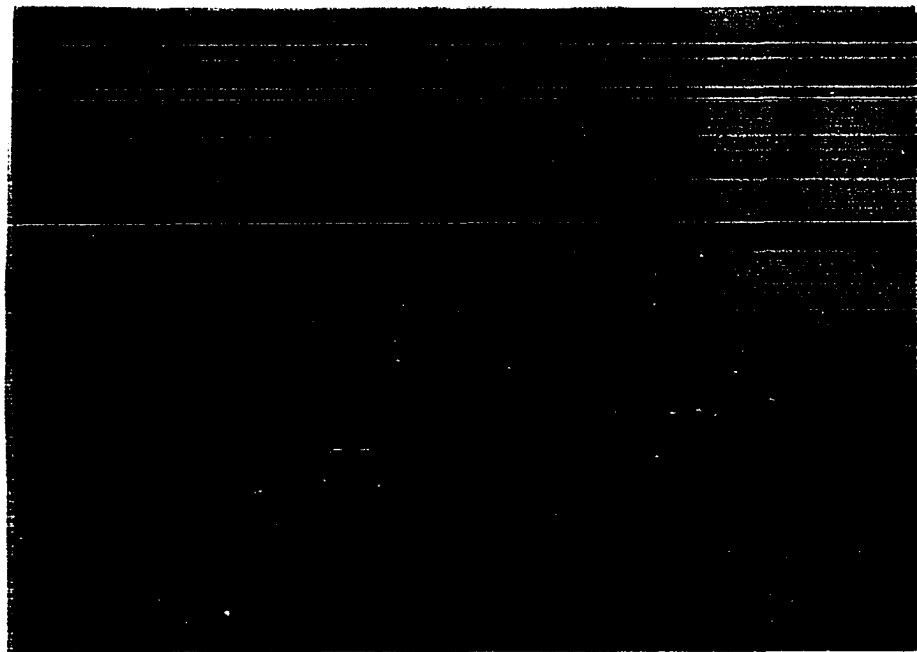
seems to happen, that which is being created has taken on a life of its own. The red strip has rendered the boxes compelling and alive. . . . I am also fascinated by the way in which they fulfill the meditation sheets I created for this week. The three of us did not do that consciously, and yet both are of one piece. The "eye-chart" on the wheel has a corresponding pair of eyes in Boxes #3 and #4. The bright colors mean that the "children of darkness" cannot possibly miss seeing the "great new sight." . . . Yes, the meditation sheets are to the boxes what the altar is to the font.

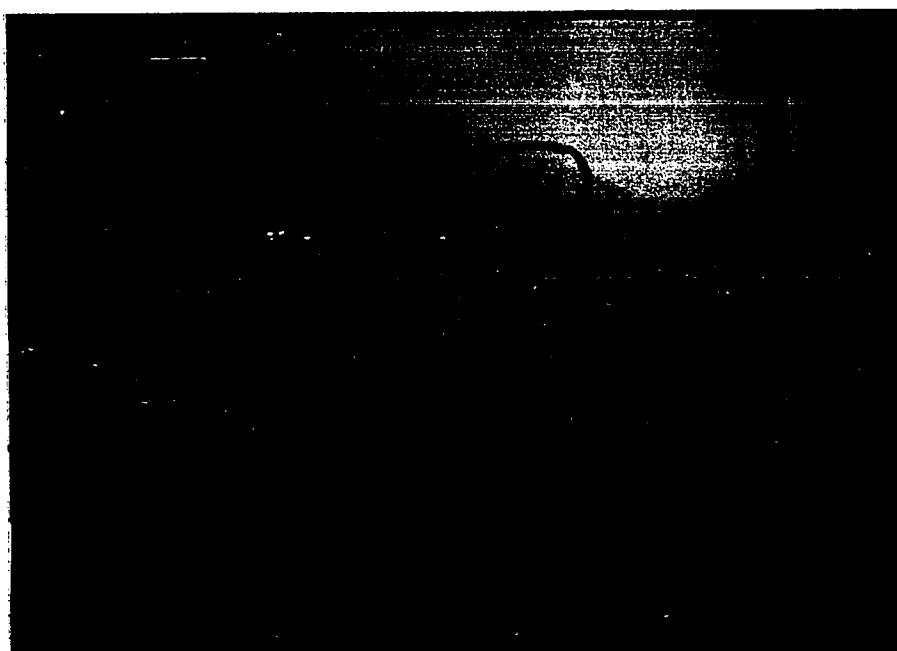
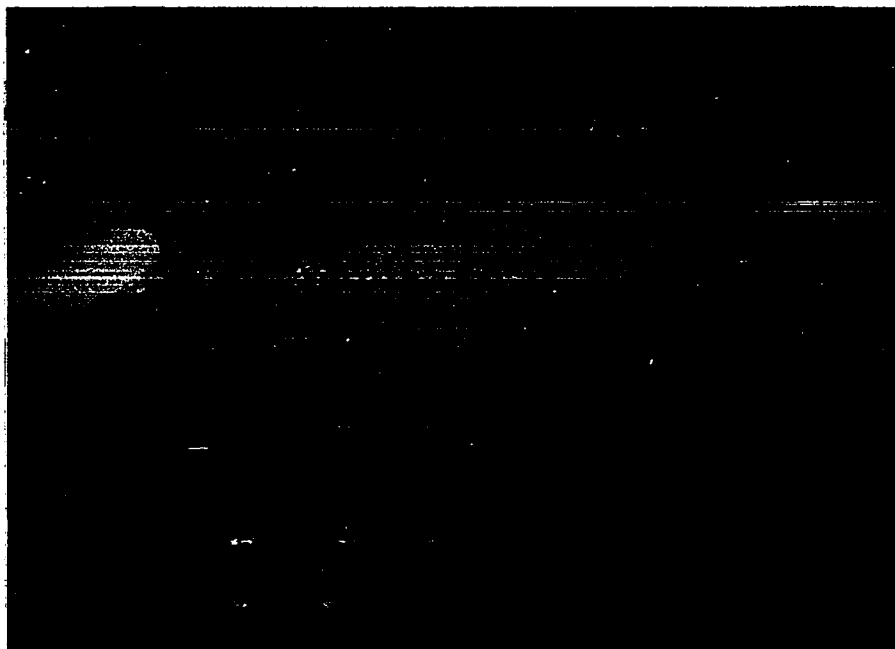


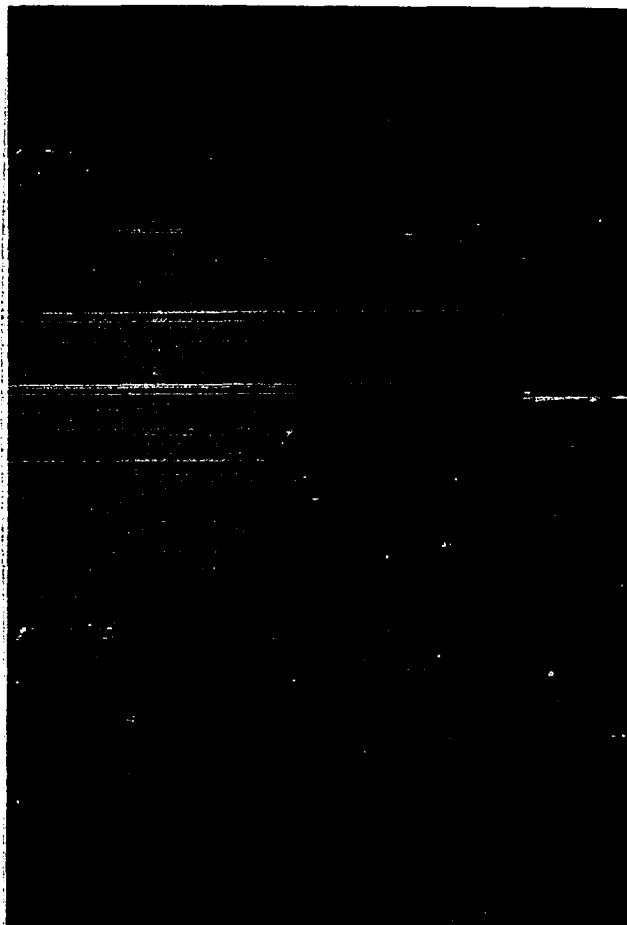
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AMERICAN COUNTRY
PLACES, INC. O 8000 BRUNSWICK LA. GA. STOCK # 7-28







WE STUMBLE-STEP THROUGH A LIFE
OF UNKNOWN TOMBS,
AND SECRET, SILENT STONES.

WE CANNOT KNOW,
AND WE ARE AFRAID:
OF THE STONE OVER THE TOMB CALLED TOMORROW.
OF THE STONE OVER THE TOMB CALLED TODAY
OF THE STONE OVER THE DARK TOMB OF DEATH.
OF THE MASK-STONE FACES ALL AROUND US
OVER HEARTS WE CANNOT SEE OR KNOW.

WHO WILL ROLL THE STONE AWAY,
THAT TOMB-COVERING STONE?
COVERING MY FEAR
MY DUTY
MY LOVE.
WHO WILL ROLL AWAY THAT SECRET
SOLID STONE?

In the midst of the old,
there is the promise of the new.
Not for those content with the now is
But for those forever discontent.
For those who can look at a caterpillar
And see not a grubby worm
but a glittering butterfly.
For those who can look at themselves
And see not destiny and fate
But hope and tomorrow's sunrise.
For those who are not afraid to die--
And I don't mean physical death.
Physical death is easy.
All it takes is a little bad luck.
And, besides, it only happens once.
To die in other ways takes courage though.
To die to the failures of the past.
To die to the limitations of the present.
To die to the bondage of contentment
with the is now that is me.
To weave a cocoon around the caterpillar
in my soul.
(Caterpillars die hard, you know.)
To die is to live.
To die is to release oneself to
new possibilities of life.
Ask any butterfly.
Ask Lazarus.
Ask that Galilean carpenter
who wove a cross-shaped cocoon
Some two thousand years ago.
But remember that cocoons are thoroughfares.
And not resort hotels.
As important as the courage to die
Is the courage to be reborn.

J. Coble

New worlds in the making
we greet you with joy.
In your coming is

the possibility of our being
more than we are.

Here a voice cries of a vision
of what could and must be.

IN THE MIDDLE OF A
VALLEY FULL OF BONES

Notes from the Fifth Week of Lent:
The Boxes Begin to Create Us

Once an artistic project begins to take on a life of its own, something else equally as fascinating happens. The creation starts to create the creator. I have seen this occur countless times in my own artistic work, but never quite as vividly as in the case of the boxes at Christ Church. Once the red strip was in place, the boxes and what they needed to become haunted me. They worked on me all week from one angle or another. By Friday, I had a vivid sense of what the next step would be. The very fact that I felt haunted had a great deal to do with the new autonomy I had sensed in the boxes on Sunday. The experimental stage was over and artistic embodiment had begun. There was now a sense of wholeness or a pattern from within. The boxes seemed to be telling me what they needed. In the words of Dorothy Sayers,

How can we know that the Idea itself has any real existence apart from the Energy? Very strangely; by the fact that the Energy itself is conscious of referring all its acts to an existing and complete whole. . . . Every choice of an episode, or a phrase, or a word is made to conform to a pattern . . . ,
 which is revealed by that choice as already existing.²⁰

²⁰Sayers, p. 56.

Monday, March 30, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

I turned to next Sunday's lectionary lessons the first thing this morning. Two images immediately stood out: Ezekiel's vision of a valley full of bones and Lazarus being raised to life. The Romans passage (6:16-21) functions almost as an intermediate passage between them. It talks of slavery by sin being replaced with freedom in eternal life. . . . It is obvious that we've begun moving into new "terrain." The desert has been left behind.

Wednesday, April 1, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

I feel both exhilarated and frustrated. For the life of me, I cannot remember all the words of that poem. It begins: "Mountains grow unnoticed, their purple peaks rise . . .," and then my memory quits. I believe this poem was written by Edna St. Vincent Millay. I distinctly remember reading it in the fourth grade. The scriptures for Sunday have triggered a recall and the beautiful view of the snow-capped San Gabriel mountains is making it more vivid. . . . The next step for the boxes must be mountains. I can feel it. . . .

Thursday April 2, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

Today as I drove home from Christ Church, I found myself reflecting on Easter Week 1973. I was in Mexico at that time, a work camp experience in a small village.

The mountains overlooking Zamora are almost identical to the mountains overlooking Claremont. . . . I vividly remember the Indians who came down from the mountains that week in order to honor Lent in the village. "Honor" took the form of scourgings and Christ-like beatings. . . .

Friday morning, April 3, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

I feel captivated by a vision not quite clear . . . a vision that won't let go until I find some way to express it.

Sunday's meditation sheet came together Friday afternoon. The creative brooding I had been doing was finally released in an artistic outburst. I made a torn-paper construction of mountains and a long, narrow valley. I asked Jon to use his calligraphy skills to ink in the phrase "in the valley . . . a valley full of bones." I then broke down the wording of a poem into a cloud-like shape hovering over the mountain range. On the back of the sheet were two poems alluding to the raising of Lazarus. When it was done, I could see that "it was good," and I "rested."

Saturday, April 4, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

Although we were very tired (i.e., Pat had been on night shift at the hospital), once I had shared my vision

of the next step . . . exciting things began to happen. I created the mountains and the blue flatlands. Pat suggested lettering the scriptures across the top of the ridges. Linda then proposed incorporating the red strip as the valley between the mountains and the flatlands. After Pat searched through the Bible for the scriptures, Linda and I chose the phrases most appropriate to our respective mountain ridges. I printed excerpts of the story of Ezekiel along the top of the mountains in Box #1 and #2. In counterpoint, Linda printed the story of Lazarus in Boxes #3 and #4. We all agreed that the last line on the high ridge in Box #4 should be the opening lines from Psalm 123: "I will lift mine eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? It comes from the Lord. . . ." Finally, I made sure that Linda's crucifix was incorporated into the new vision by forming the bottom of the mountains and the tops of the blue flatlands to create a cave around it. In this way, the crucifix became Lazarous. An old symbol was made to carry a new meaning.

All this wonderful flow occurred in an unconscious and uncommented upon way. We talked very little and yet we dialogued a lot. I note our process of dialogue here because this give-and-take dialogue is group process and artistic process at its best. The fact of the matter is that we have developed a group consciousness in terms of our artistic endeavor. The sky feels like the limit. We walked away drained but exhilarated by what we had done. It was very, very "good," and we "rested."

Thursday, April 9, 1981

My meeting notes from this day are full of all sorts of interesting reflections on the boxes of last Saturday.

[Excerpt from journal]

The wholeness of the entire project is now apparent. The banner, the meditation sheets, and the boxes are working together. We know where we have been. We can see where we are going. Visually we are watching a season grow in organic fashion.

The three of you have done some fascinating theological work. For example, you have taken words of scripture, deprived them of their scriptural authority and given them aesthetic and design authority. You've done so by choosing, juxtaposing, transforming and turning words into art. In all these ways you broke a lot of conventions in order to get people to think.

Fabric has become something you read, and read through. The issue thus becomes one of dimension. There has been a play on space-within-space. A world-within-a-world has been created.

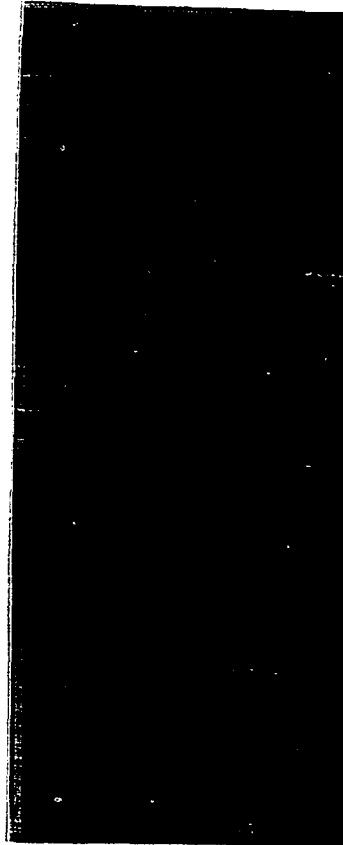
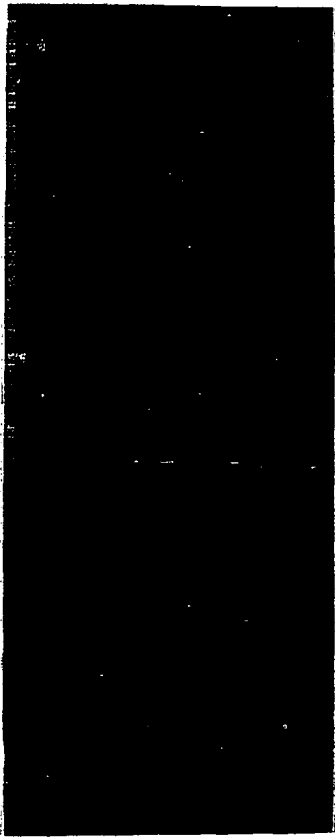
The boxes themselves imply a kind of fourfold movie screen or stage. They frame the dynamic, evolving landscape within their space and the old Renaissance concept of a picture as a "window on reality" is fulfilled.

The boxes are icons of a different sort. The classical icon dealt with time in such a way as to draw the viewer into it. The old icons always consisted of a 3/4 view. In this way, they involved the viewer in dialogue with a timeless reality. Our boxes are icons of action. The action within draws the viewer inside.

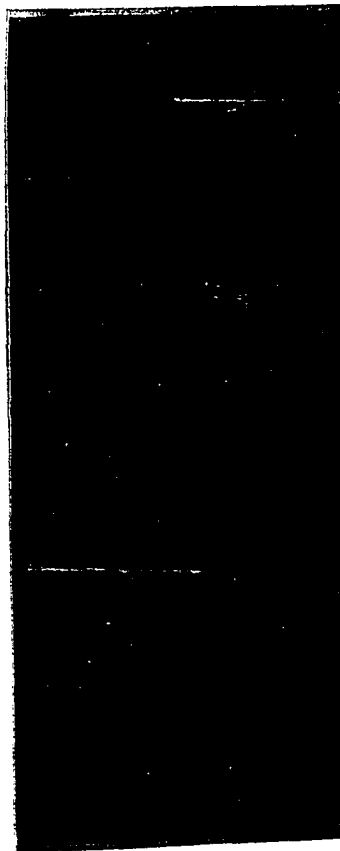
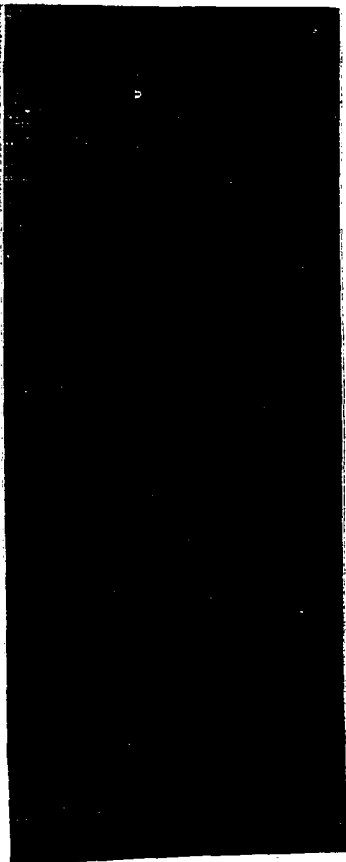
Finally, my notes show Jon making mention of the fascination he observes when parishioners and outside people realize the boxes are changing. For example, some of those who attend Alcoholics Anonymous at the church mid-week wandered in to study them, and confessed that they did not expect to see something so dynamic in a church. Someone else from the parish also observed. "Every time you look at them, you have to remember what they looked like before. . . ."

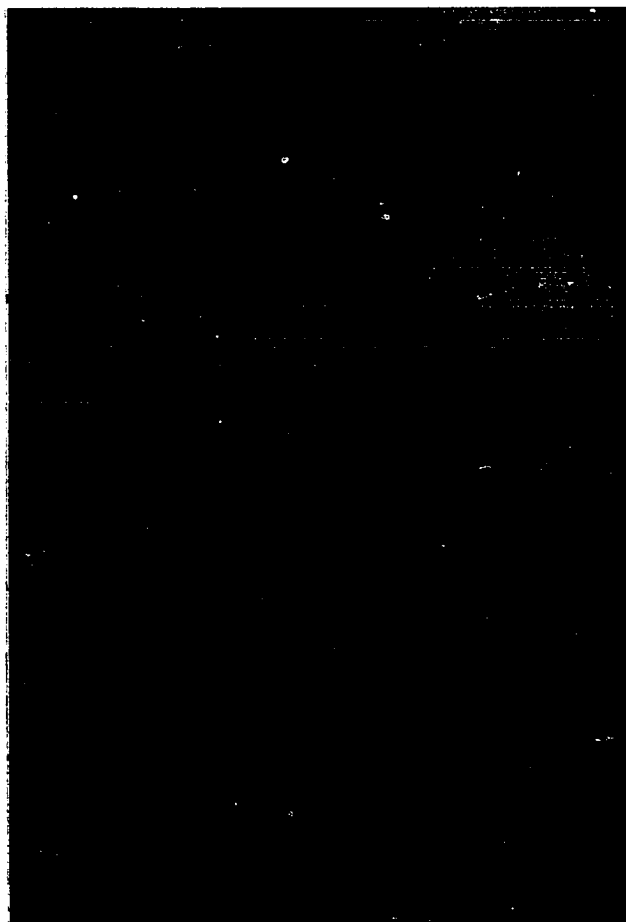
[Excerpt from journal]

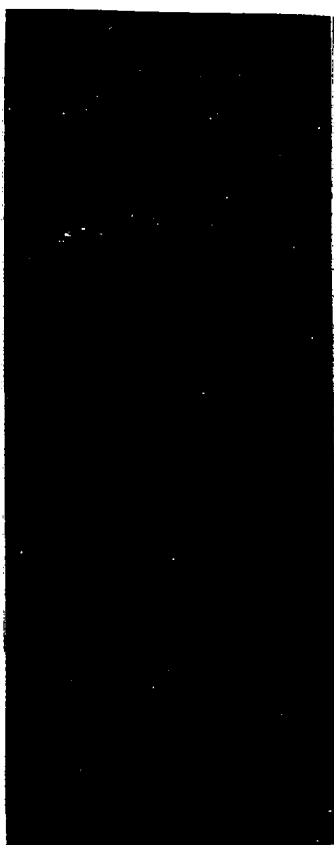
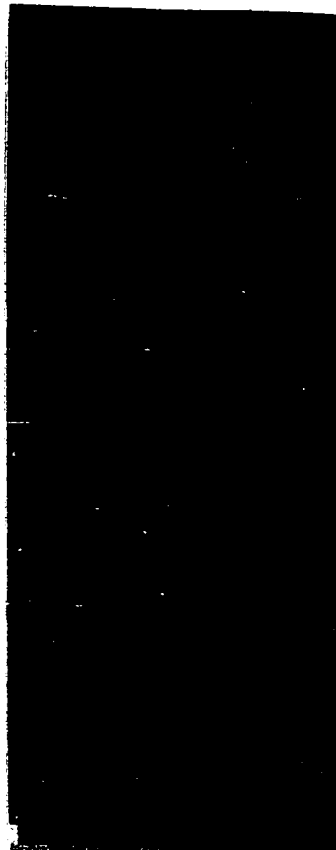
In commentary such as this I find further confirmation of the creative power of the new creation.



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The Sixth Week of Lent: The Boxes Are Completed

[Excerpt from journal]

Captivation by the boxes continues. . . . A snatch from an old hymn is plaguing me now. The phrase "time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away . . ." ²¹ tumbles playfully through my mind. . . .

We have moved out of the desert and are half-way through our pilgrim passage down the narrow valley that winds around the base of the towering mountains. . . . Our path will soon open out into wider ground. . . . What began as a slow trickle in time is now sweeping toward a magnificent crescendo. I have a steady sense of acceleration as I read the lectionary lessons for this week.

This coming Sunday is "passion and victory" rolled into one. Like a mighty river, this Lenten journey can no longer be dammed or turned aside. . . . Words do not do justice to my sense of things . . . images of a river keep taking over. . . .

Saturday, March 11, 1981

When I arrived on Saturday, the others were ready to simply cover over the boxes with the brown organdy. This had been the original plan. I persisted in wanting to change the mountains and valley of the previous week into the river of my journal. The brown organdy could then go

²¹Hymnbook for Christian Worship (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1970), p. 23.

over the front of the boxes as planned. Pat and Linda finally agreed, although reluctantly, and we set to work. I took the lead in forming the new overlays. Just colored organdy would do; no words were necessary this time. We finished the entire two-part task in a couple of hours, and hung the boxes back on the wall.

Sunday, March 12, 1981

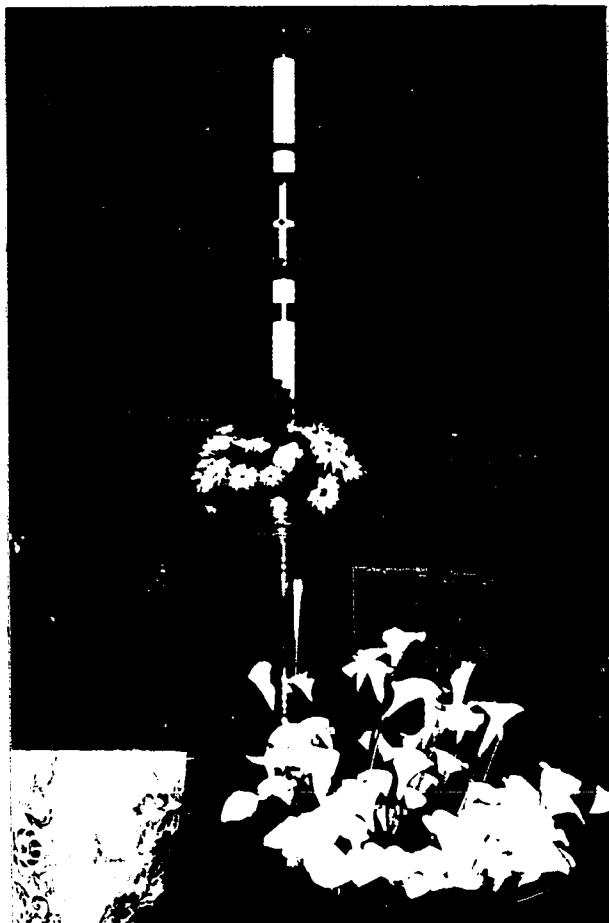
[Excerpt from journal]

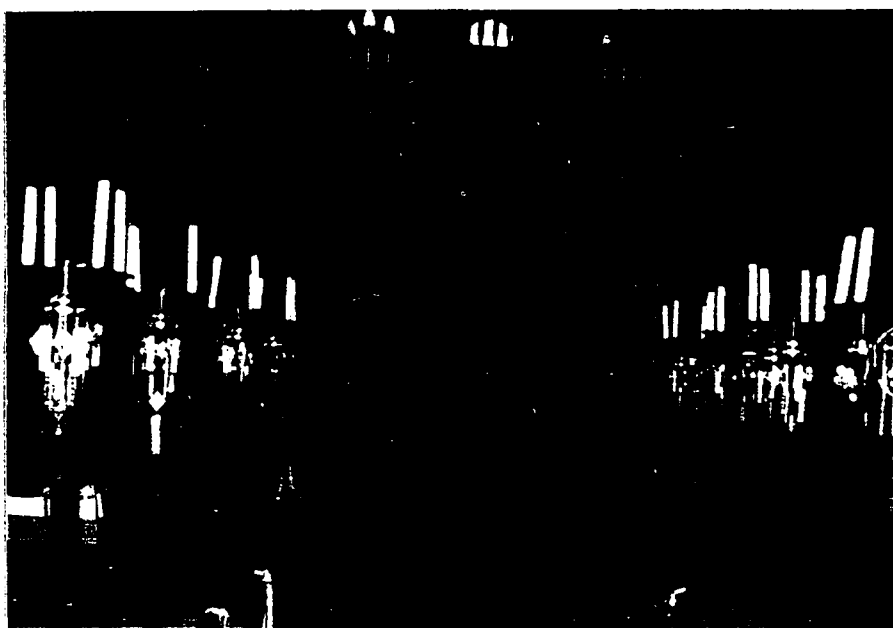
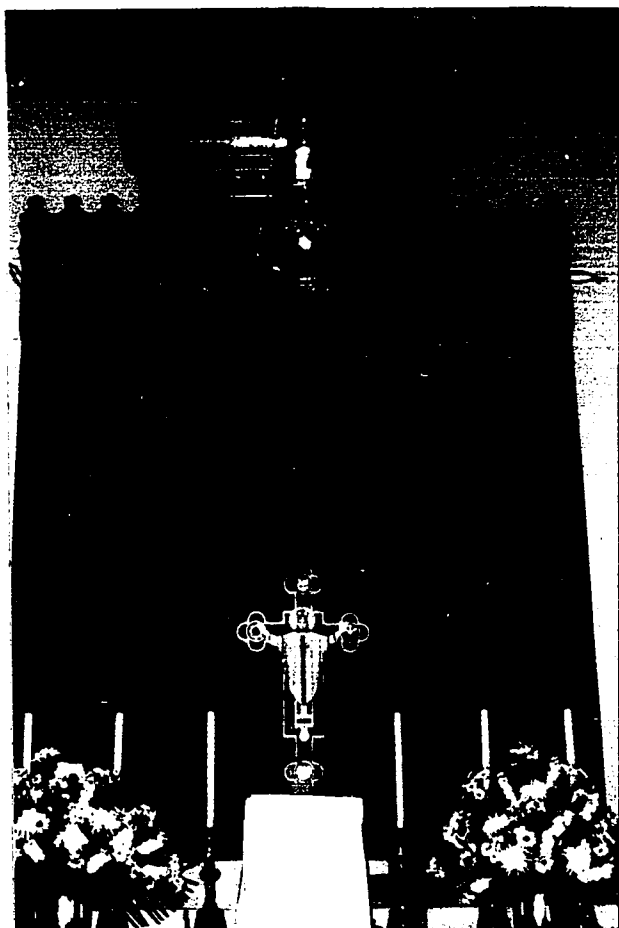
Fascinating! When all is said and done, the focus is once again on the crucifix in Box #4. Amid the flow of the river we have created, it is the only form that stands out distinctly. Deeply-colored currents and eddys flow around it. . . . I see a "suffering servant" caught in the chaos. . . . We have completed the journey. Desert has become a mighty stream. At last I understand what we mean when we say that baptism is a "dying to the old."

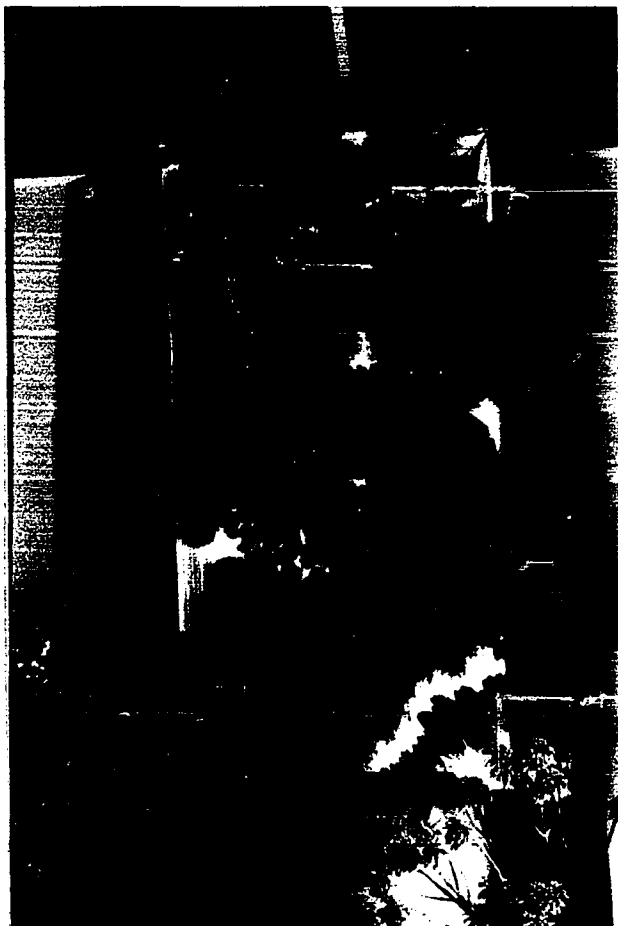
This was the last Sunday for the boxes. They hung on the wall from Palm/Passion Sunday through the liturgy of Maundy Thursday. At that time, the entire sanctuary was stripped bare to prepare for Holy Friday.

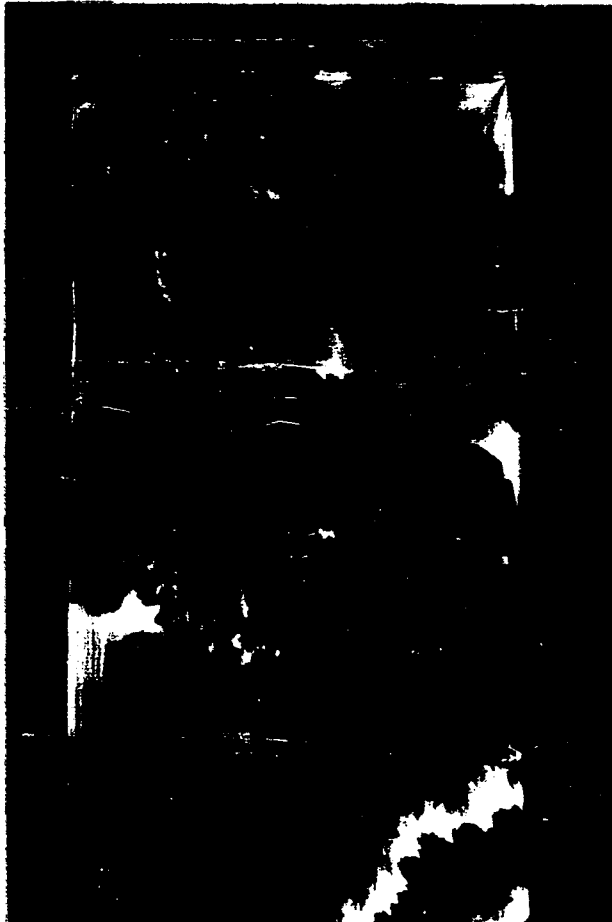
As I reflect back on this week, a new insight stands out. The more we were able to focus in on the boxes, the more abstract our artistry became. Words finally gave way totally to flowing form.

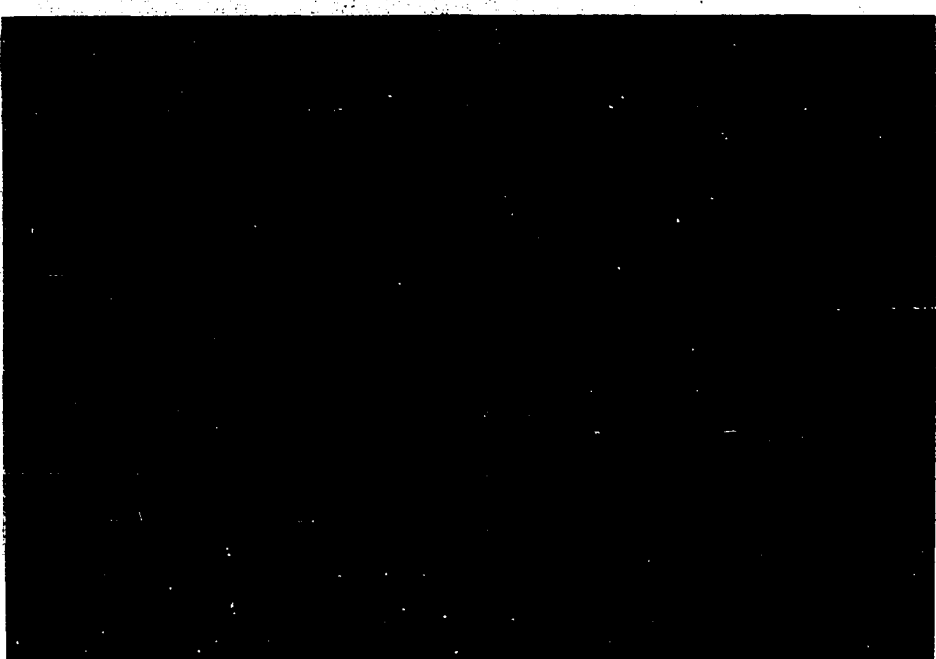
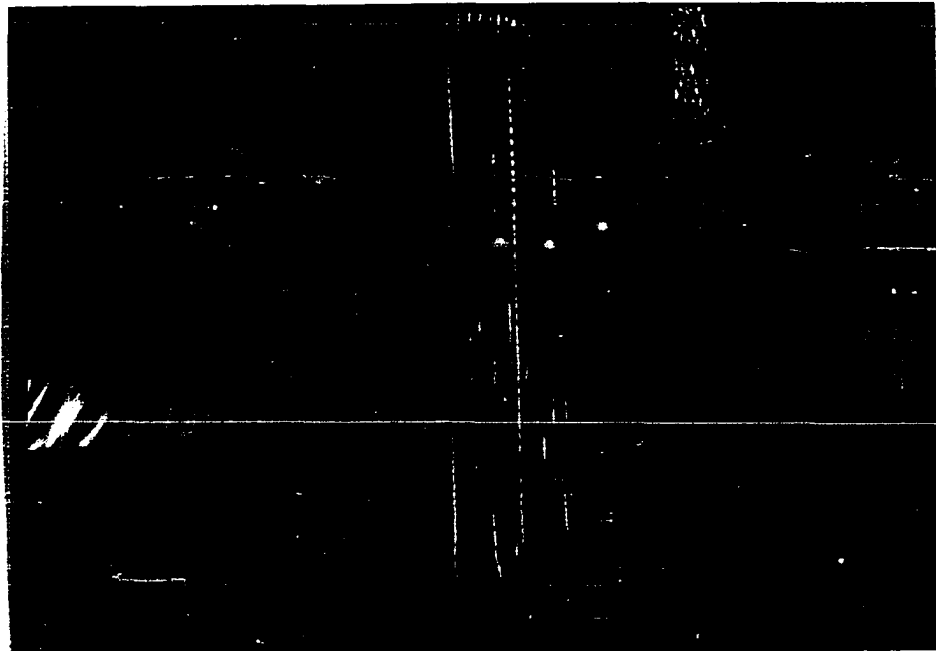
Due to the length of the Palm/Passion Sunday worship bulletin, Jon requested that meditation sheets not be made.

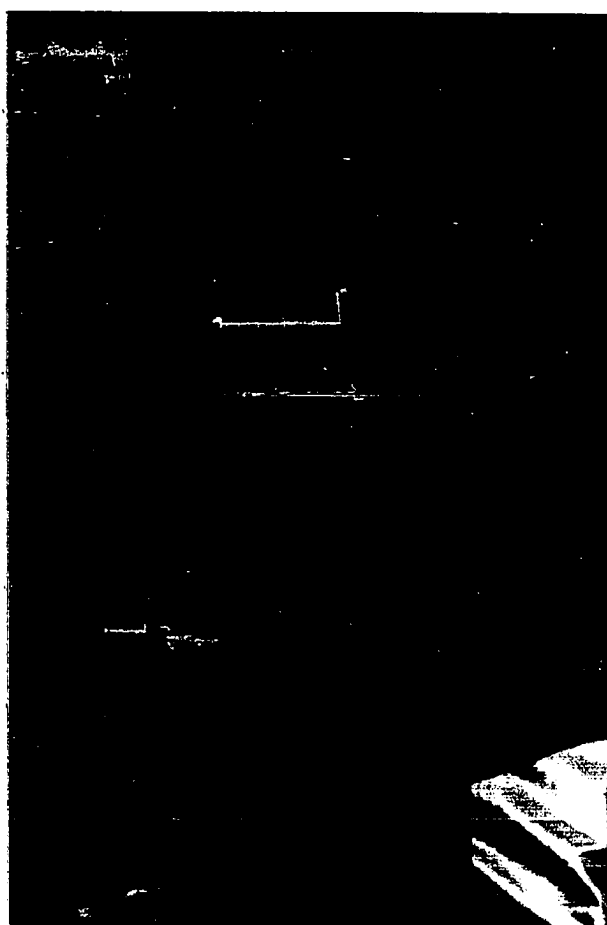












Notes from Holy Week and the Easter Vigil:
The Baptismal Banner and the Red Paper Kites

The final week of Lent 1981 consisted of two stories of creation. These stories serve as counterpoints to each other. One is the story of artistry manifested in courageous struggle. The other describes artistry bursting forth in playful celebration.

The original plan called for the creation of a second tie-dye banner in response to the theme of baptism. After seeing the boxes in their final stage on Saturday, I decided to let that original plan go. This decision was made almost instantaneously. Some have called such decisions an artistic leap of faith. It was the same letting go, conditioned hunch, and creative hope pushing back boundaries that was described in Chapter II. After completing the boxes, I knew the baptismal banner needed more fluidity than the tie-dye technique could offer. Therefore, I decided that this last banner would be made using a method known as squirt-dye. Squirt-dye is water-color done on fabric.

This banner turned out to be the most difficult I have ever made. This was true for several reasons. First, I felt from the beginning that only an abstract design would adequately express the feeling I was after for this banner. Unfortunately, abstraction has never been my forte

as an artist. I have had little experience with it and was not sure how to go about achieving the effect I wanted. Secondly, I attempted to bring some other people into the process when my own sense of vision was not clear enough. The experience was almost a disaster until I took charge again. Ultimately, it was an outstanding learning experience.

Monday, April 13, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

Today I started to work on the paper-strip hangings that I had sketched in my journal earlier.²² I intend to group them in clusters on either side of the Baptismal Banner at the Easter Vigil Service.

. . . My sewing machine is just great with paper. Wow! I've already created over a dozen of my so-called kites, some of them 8 feet long. These hangings are wonderful foolishness. I find myself draping them over the balcony of my third floor seminary room just to watch them flutter in the wind and to surprise passersby. I have already given some of them away to friends. They make wonderful gifts.

Wednesday, March 15, 1981

I set up for the squirt-dye process in what I thought would be a secluded spot on the seminary campus.

²²See page 120 in this chapter. Also see Appendix for a sample of these kites.

I soon learned the error in my judgment. Many people began to drift by. Some stopped to observe and comment. All this coming and going began to erode my concentration. Halfway through the process what sense of power and clarity I did have was gone. I stood there feeling helpless and lost in my own artistic endeavor. It became apparent that my vision for this second banner was too weakly formulated to withstand such outside interruptions. At that point, I should have walked away until I could restore my concentration. Instead, I responded with a defensive, embarrassed gesture of which I am still ashamed. I invited someone else into the process and encouraged him to dabble in what should have been my process alone. He added some color details that were good in and of themselves. However, they really were not part of my vision for the banner. The very fact that they were out of character with what I had been trying to express was the spark that finally rekindled my own concentration. After he left I was able to reclaim what I had temporarily given away. I incorporated his dabblings into my work. After two days of major touch-up and reflection, I felt the banner was finished.

From this experience, I learned that there comes a point in the artistic process when the artist must defend her own creation against the rival visions of others. To do so requires an authority from within, a guiding sense of what should be. If the artist does not have such a

vision, her artistry is in jeopardy.

What writer whose trinity was strongly coordinated would ever dream of revising his work to conform with the majority report of a committee? Those whose Idea is in full control are especially obstinate and impervious to criticism, for in speaking for the Father they speak with authority and not as scribblers.²³

The Baptismal Banner functioned as an elegant parable. It clearly indicated the dividing line between group participation and artistic integrity. I will always have a special bond to this banner because it represents the best and worst of my own artistic process. It has become a symbol to me for artistry redeemed.

Thursday, April 16, 1981

[Excerpt from journal]

When I showed the banner to Linda Nichols tonight, she thanked me for giving her a vision. Linda has volunteered to create a new set of boxes for the south wall to replace our boxes which had been taken down this evening after the Maundy Thursday service. Her boxes will go up the night of the Easter Vigil and stay up for the whole Easter Season.

The Easter Vigil Service: April 19, 1981

The Easter Vigil is a fascinating tradition that deserves special mention at this point. It is like nothing I have ever experienced before. Where it is observed, it

²³Sayers, p. 161.

is considered the first service of Easter Day. It is celebrated in dramatic and solemn fashion at a convenient time between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter morning. The service always consists of four parts: (1) an elaborate Service of Light, which involves kindling the Paschal Candle; (2) a lengthy Liturgy of the Word;²⁴ (3) the Christian Initiation or Renewal of Baptismal Vows already mentioned; and (4) the Holy Eucharist. Historically, the Easter Vigil has been the greatest service of the Christian year.²⁵

[Excerpt from journal]

The banner functions beautifully behind the font. It makes a powerful visual proclamation that new creation arises from the waters of chaos. The shading and shapes in turquoise, dark blue, and maroon bring back memories of mountain ranges and mighty rivers. The words, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth" (Genesis 1) keep coming to mind when I study it. Birth and baptism are now one.

On either side of the banner, I hung a long, narrow strip of maroon felt which functioned almost like a frame. These vertical stripes attached to the banner pole along with the banner, bring back memories of a blue racing stripe

²⁴Proposed Book of Common Prayer, pp. 288-292, 893. Also see Appendix.

²⁵See Theodore J. Kleinhans, The Year of the Lord, The Church Year: Its Customs, Growth, and Ceremony (Saint

that once hung in the same place.

[Excerpt from journal]

The use of red for the paper streamers or kites was a stroke of genius. Red is not the traditional color of Easter, but it works very effectively nonetheless. It creates all kinds of links with other things in the sanctuary, both past and present. For example, the red of the paper draws out the red in the Baptismal Banner. . . . Then there is the original crucifix that once stood in front of the desert banner. It's gone now, replaced by another crucifix, but both have fire-engine red crosses. The two ends of the sanctuary are once again linked, this time by the color red. . . . The horizontal strips in my paper kites also bring to mind the red horizontal strip that first unified the four boxes. . . . Finally, the red streamers are perfect partners with the firecrackers and Chinese wind chimes that are such an important part of the Easter tradition at Christ Church. . . .

Linda's boxes were a fresh focus of all the artistic manifestations that had gone before. I could see mountains, rivers, and baptismal water. I remember having a profound sense of humility when I saw her boxes that night. It is humbling when one's own artistry has become the spark for new creation. The red cartouches on each of her boxes were a brilliant conception on her part. They were reminiscent of the paper kites or streamers. More importantly, they held

Louis: Concordia, 1967), pp. 75-77, and H. Boone Porter, Keeping the Church Year (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), pp. 73-75.

words from "The Thanksgiving Prayer Over the Water of Baptism" taken from the Baptismal Service. By using this prayer, she linked her boxes to the font.

We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
 . . .²⁶

She helped us complete the journey by using this prayer. The trek out of the desert was finished.

AT THE END: DISCOVERIES FROM THE
 CHRIST CHURCH PROJECT LENT 1981

All experience represents an opportunity for growth. Every completed endeavor can function as a springboard for new insight. The project at Christ Church was just such a learning opportunity for me. The venture was broad enough in scope and time to have had a major impact on my thinking about liturgical art. I was able to test, strengthen, and confirm all my previously operating assumptions. At the

²⁶Proposed Book of Common Prayer, p. 306.

same time, the project challenged me to expand on those assumptions. In this section, I will share many of the discoveries I made.

Discovery #1

There really is a predictable pattern in the artistic process. The experience at Christ Church has enabled me to identify it. As previously stated, liturgy has its own structure, rhythm and pace. This is also true of the artistic process. There is a unique gathering, building up, climax and descent to dismissal. The artist begins by gathering possibilities. Through exploration, the artist is able to make choices and select a focus. Climax comes with the incarnation of this possibility into a new thing. Artistic descent is marked by the power of the creation to shape the creator. Dismissal comes when this new work of creation is fulfilled and complete.

Discovery #2

The artist, including the liturgical artist, must always cooperate with the creation of this artistic process. As Dorothy Sayer reminds us,

The only way of "mastering" one's materials is to abandon the whole conception of mastery and co-operate with it in love: whosoever will be the lord of life, let him be its servant. If he tries to wrest life out of its true nature, it will revenge itself in judgment,

as the work revenges itself upon the domineering artist.²⁷

This was confirmed through my different experiences with the Baptismal Banner and the Lenten boxes.

Discovery #3

At the same time, new creation is always the distinctive offering of a unique individual. All art carries the mark of its maker. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the Lenten boxes. Linda, Pat, and I each had a unique way of seeing, and our artistry displayed it. Pat is a medical diagnostician; therefore, her artistry expressed an elegant precision and symmetry. Linda is a photographer and her artistry manifested itself in bold design and sweeping statement. I am a theologian with strong artistic and mystic leanings; therefore, my artistry reflected a concern with juxtaposition and fluidity in form and color.

Discovery #4

Artistry can occur in the midst of group process, but such artistry requires a smaller group than I originally postulated. As Jon Olson has remarked on numerous occasions, "Art is probably done with only as many people as can be

²⁷Sayers, p. 186.

seated around a card table" My experience at Christ Church confirmed this for me. True group artistry began to occur only when our work force of artists became a committed "band of three." The ongoing dialogue that is necessary for artistry was maintained in this small group.

Discovery #5

My discovery regarding group size leads to a clarification of the dividing line between artistic production and true artistry. Large groups can participate in the so-called dismissal or the production end of artistry (i.e., making a series of liturgical banners), but such production is only possible if a small group (or individual) has preceded them in the artistic process of gathering, building up, climax, and descent. The sheer size of a larger group does not allow for the ongoing dialogue and community development necessary for group artistry.

Discovery #6

Art always begets art. The project at Christ Church was extensive enough in scope to illustrate this truth over and over again. The following list offers a variety of examples of this type of interplay:

--The shadow cast on the Desert Banner begets the crucifix in Linda's box.

- The bright colors of the later Lenten Boxes beget
the bright colors in the Baptismal Banner.
- The shape of the Lenten Boxes begets the shape and
style of the meditation sheets.
- The interplay of scripture and poetry on meditation
sheets begets the juxtaposition in the boxes.
- A line of poetry begets the image of mountains.
- A verse of a hymn begets the image of a river.
- The red paper streamers beget the red cartouches on
the Easter Boxes.

Discovery #7

The access of the artist to many and varied resources, both past and present, plays a vital role in the artistic process. The project at Christ Church represented the coming together of many streams of influence such as scripture, poetry, persons, tradition, hymns, history, theology, and personal experience. The more extensive these resources, the deeper the well from which the artist can draw new power and inspiration. The liturgical artist should be constantly seeking ways to expand her outer horizons and inner depths by means of travel, study, dialogue, meditation, and prayer. My weekly meetings with Jon Olson represented an example of resourcing that was concurrent with the project.

Discovery #8

Liturgy is the primary focus to which all the other resources of the liturgical artist are brought. The liturgy of the Church is the deepest and most fruitful resource available to the liturgical artist. As the artist explores the dynamics, the subtle nuance, and coherent rationale of the liturgy, she is involved in a rich interplay of profound and productive symbol.

Discovery #9

Art deals with the interrelationships which symbolize the condition of life. Therefore, when we chose to focus our artistry on one theme, other related concepts were drawn into the process and dealt with as well. This was particularly true in the Christ Church project, as evidenced by the image of the crucifix that kept being reinterpreted in the Lenten Boxes. Also, the theme of creation crept into the boxes as the weeks passed and burst forth in the Baptismal Banner. Neither of these themes had been chosen in the beginning.

The fact that this happened is not due to a failure in focus on the part of the artists. It is linked to the reality of art.

The deepest meaning in all art is basically the same meaning--the sense of life itself. . . . As life

consists of stresses and releases, of actions and reactions, of anticipations and resolutions, so every art-work is a system of stresses and releases, of actions and reactions, of anticipations and resolutions.²⁸

The concept of focus in the arts should not be abandoned. However, the artist also recognizes that in attempting to deal with one theme in depth she will ultimately address other themes as well. This is due to the fact that all things are related in some way at the ground level of reality.

Discovery #10

Art created for a specific time and place is valid. In exploring the concept of time, we also explored the concept of "temporary or throwaway art," as (Sister Mary) Corita Kent has sometimes spoken of it. The Lenten boxes 1981 were a special "Pentecost of power" that will never come again. They were historical in that they marked a unique intersection of scripture, tradition, and experience. Their symbols and character were bound up in the process by which they were made and by which they framed a particular moment in time.

My response to this discovery was to make a conscious decision to disassemble the boxes when Lent was over. In that way they became true examples of "temporary

²⁸Thompson, p. 34.

or throwaway art." At first, this decision was difficult. I had never undone any of my creations before. However, I came to view it as an act of love that honored the basic integrity of the boxes. To hang them again in another place was not to use them properly or in all their fullness. Of course, there still are pictures that tell the story. More importantly, there is now a memory waiting to be rekindled in a new Pentecost.

Discovery #11

There is a correlation between beauty and theological truth. Our artistry at Christ Church was beautiful because it was theologically true. One cannot misuse one's materials without making a theological misstatement. This discovery is supported in the following statement:

Beauty is that quality of an oak tree, for, instance, which renders its reality so irresistibly captivating to our minds. When the reality of any-thing strikes your mind forcibly, beauty is there.²⁹

The job of the liturgical artist is to bring this compelling reality into focus. The truth of things will always capture the worshipper's attention.

Discovery #12

There can be artistry in the way observers receive

²⁹Robert W. Clement, "Art and Uncommonsense," Liturgical Arts, 16:1 (November 1947), 14.

a creative endeavor. The artistic dialogue that goes on between a creation and a worshipper can be just as significant as what goes on between the artist and her creation. The various types of feedback reported in the journal reflect this. Indeed, this feedback enriched my own perception. A three-way fellowship was established between creation, creator, and worshipping community. This fellowship built up the entire Christ Church community during Lent 1981.

Discovery #13

Abstract form is extremely effective in communicating the sacramental vision of reality. While representational art runs the risk of becoming overly sentimental or overly concerned with relevance, abstract art opens the door to a wider reality. It gives hints about the depth and breadth of reality, without structuring any of its content too tightly. Abstract art leaves one's imagination always in pursuit of new vistas of possibility and insight.

Discovery #14

Abstract form can be used very effectively by groups involved in the artistic process. It allows various artists to work side by side on a project without denying individual creativity. The insights of various artists are unique.

The use of abstract form allows this uniqueness to mesh in the same work. The experience of the boxes at Christ Church proved the following point by Padovano:

Religious and aesthetic experience is always plural in its form though strangely homogeneous in its final statement. The plurality of religious experiences and historic faiths terminates in a vision of unity . . . because plurality does not lead to fundamental diversity. . . . On the deepest levels of life, there are no divisions. The plurality of aesthetic experiences likewise terminates in a perception of beauty which transcends all boundaries, and witnesses in its own way to the unity of life and the joy that such a unity engenders.³⁰

Discovery #15

Both failure and redemption are possibilities in the artistic process. Failure is signified by the fact that the liturgical artist may fall short in a particular attempt at incarnation. Redemption means that out of that failure new artistic incarnation is made possible. These possibilities imbue the artistic process with a certain creative tension. As Dorothy Sayers has said, the artist

. . . knows very well that he, in his world, is forever ground between the upper and nether millstones of the universal paradox. His creature simultaneously demands manifestation in space-time and stubbornly opposes it; the will of his universe is to life as implacably as it is to chaos.³¹

The liturgical artist must come to terms with this ever-

³⁰Padovano, p. 11.

³¹Sayers, p. 141.

present tension and learn to use it as a steppingstone for new growth and insight.

Discovery #16

In the last analysis, it must be said that success in liturgical arts is always a matter of proposing the right project at the right moment to the right persons. Success is the result of adequately assessing all the resources, limitations and factors involved in any given worship situation, and then constructing an appropriate artistic response.

EPILOGUE

This Doctor of Ministry project has attempted to define liturgical art using a threefold approach. Three distinct, yet closely related, concerns have been explored as a means of establishing a definitive statement. First, Chapter 1 established a context for liturgical art. This chapter sought to present a definition of art using a five-category structure to examine the important issues found in art theory. Secondly, Chapter 2 offered and then detailed a definition of liturgical art proper. Liturgical art was evaluated as a unique subdiscipline of art and an artistic act of service on behalf of a particular worshipping community. Thirdly, Chapter 3 was the illustrated story of one liturgical art endeavor from start to finish. This chapter chronicled one particular attempt at the integration of theory and practice in the field. Finally, in this closing statement it is my intention to offer some personal reflections regarding an appropriate theology for the arts.

It would be impossible to develop an adequate theology of the arts in the space left in this project. Such a theology would be a Doctor of Ministry project in its own right. Others have already attempted such a treatise, and their work would need to be extensively reviewed and

evaluated before offering my own statement. Scholars such as Paul Tillich,¹ Nicolas Berdyaev,² and Jacques Maritain³

¹See particularly Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), and Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959). He notes that every age has its own characteristic style, disclosed nowhere else so powerfully as in its art. In that style, the reigning interpretation of human nature and destiny is crystallized. Therefore, an examination of artistic style is necessary for anyone who would relate the Gospel to the contemporary world. Tillich also wants to use the symbol of the cross to appraise the arts. Believing the cross to be the ultimate example of revelation, the ultimate example of being transparent to the Infinite, Tillich contends it must be held up in contrast to all human activity. All human activity will either reflect the finite turning away from the infinite claiming to be ultimate itself or open to the infinite and confessing its own finitude. Only the cross expresses the proper relationship between the relative and the absolute.

²See particularly: Nicholas Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit (London: Blas, 1948), and Nicholas Berdyaev, The Meaning of the Creative Act (New York: Harper & Row, 1955). Berdyaev, a Russian Orthodox philosopher, appears to interpret the artist's experience in an eschatological context: the contrast between the present slavery and final freedom for the children of God. Human beings can use their imagination to fashion new worlds. Art, he says, is essentially religious because it reflects the yearning for the kingdom. Art also serves as a pledge of the coming kingdom, for it is a genuine participation in God's own creativeness. Creativity is born out of discontent with the present and is an epiphany of humankind's future. The artist is a paradigm of redemption. The artist's creativity refutes determinism: it reflects God's gift of freedom through Christ.

³See particularly: Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), and Jacques Maritain, The Range of Reason (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952). Maritain adopts an entirely different perspective than Tillich or Berdyaev. For him the arts are the natural fruits of the human spirit; a celebration of what the Creator has done. The artist does not participate in divine creativity: she responds to it. Aesthetic

(a representative from Catholic circles) have each developed a systematic perspective on the origin and nature of the artistic venture as it relates to the Christian story about humanity, the world, and God. Of course, the approach and conclusions of each of these scholars is distinct. However, they share one underlying assumption in common. Each has assumed that the message of art is the primary issue for a theology of art. Being an artist as well as a theologian, I am convinced that this is not the most appropriate point of focus. Theologians should be setting their sights on the fact that artists create, rather than on what a particular creation means. Therefore, this closing statement will consist of some theological reflections that grow out of my experience as a liturgical artist. The artistic process itself has some inherent implications for developing a theology of the arts.

To venture some theological considerations on this basis is to borrow a theological category mentioned by M. E. Moore and others. I am suggesting that "empirical theology" is an appropriate approach to the arts. "Empirical theology" means that persons begin with their present experience and attempt to discern the truth in that

activity is inspired by pleasure that finite and definite things give to human senses. The arts speak of the importance of limits and constraint in rendering human freedom concrete; they testify to the "connaturality" of humans and the natural world.

situation. The empirical theological approach is affirmed by such theologians as Friedrich Schleiermacher who felt that the Christian experience is united with the Divine in such a way that the study of human experience should tell us something about the Divine. "This conclusion was possible for Schleiermacher because he believed all reality is one so that a person's own deepest experience is related to all reality."⁴ Schleiermacher's view would parallel the concept of sacramental vision already discussed in chapter 2.

Taking my stand, then, on the empirical approach to theology, I dare the following thesis. The artistic process is a loose analogy for the process of God's creativity. If one is looking for a "creaturely" parallel to the mind and activity of God, one can look to the artist. Of course, it is always perilous and inadequate to interpret God by analogy with humankind. One runs the risk of being captivated by idolatrous anthropomorphism. However, the fact of the matter is that there is no other way of knowing. The language of metaphor is thus the only language we really have for God. Therefore, while acknowledging the great limitations of this approach, I still want to venture an observation on the basis of it: God and humankind share

⁴Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Education for Continuity and Change" (Ph.D. dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, 1981), pp. 106-107.

a common characteristic and it is the desire and ability to make things.

Dorothy Sayers makes the same point in the following statement:

The artist's knowledge of his own creative nature is often unconscious; he pursues his mysterious way of life in a strange innocence. If he were consciously to pluck out the heart of his mystery, he might say something like this: I find in myself a certain pattern which I acknowledge as the law of my true nature, and which corresponds to experience in such a manner that, while my behavior conforms to the pattern, I can interpret experience in power. I find, further, that the same pattern inheres in my work as in myself; and I also find that theologians attribute to God Himself precisely that pattern of being which I find in my work and in me.⁵

What is really being argued for here is a recovery of an old article of faith often ignored by contemporary Protestantism--a belief in God as Creator. Free creativeness seems to be the nature of God, the free creativeness of humanity may be the response to a great call by the Creator. The artist, of course, stands out at this point by the fact that her free creativeness is incarnated in the form we call art. The artist manages to create a grand new thing just as God does. The artist uses spontaneity and inspired willfulness to make something that has never been before. She recognizes life as being more than merely a choice between presented alternatives. She attempts to

⁵ Dorothy L. Sayers, The Mind of the Maker (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1941), p. 212.

bring new options into being using all the resources at hand, both within and without.

This type of perceiving and offering of life should be understood and valued by the Christian community. Artistry should be seen as human revelation--an analogue for God's revelation. Art is the very best of human expression, the incarnation of supreme insight and vision. Indeed, as Hazelton has noted, "the pregnant phrase of Dante, 'Art is the grandchild of God' should be remembered and acted on by the Church."⁶ Human artistry reflects and embodies the God who makes all things, including humanity. The Church should recognize this connection and affirm the existence of the artist in its midst as well as elsewhere.

The ongoing artistic process is a working analogy for God's process. All artistic endeavor, including liturgical art, belongs to that shaping, form-giving activity bent on achieving order and worthwhile meaning which we know as the creativity of God. God creates the world by imagination and so does the artist. Any theology of the arts must therefore begin here at this intersection of human and Godly experience. That the artist creates, rather than what she creates, is of primary importance for beginning any theological investigation in the area. This is my confession of faith as an artist.

⁶Roger Hazelton, A Theological Approach to Art (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 87.

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THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

- Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?
- People I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
- Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
- People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
- Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
- People I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
- Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever
you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you proclaim by work and example the Good News of
God in Christ?
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving
your neighbor as yourself?
- People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people,
and respect the dignity of every human being?
- People I will, with God's help.

LECTIONARY A

Lent 1981

	<u>Psalm</u>	<u>Lessons</u>
Ash Wednesday	103 or 103:8-14	Joel 2:1-2,12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12 2 Corinthians 5:20b--6:10 Matthew 6:1-6,16-21
First Sunday in Lent	51 or 51:1-13	Genesis 2:4b-9,15-17,25--3:7 Romans 5:12-19(20-21) Matthew 4:1-11
Second Sunday in Lent	33:12-22	Genesis 12:1-8 Romans 4:1-5(6-12)13-17 John 3:1-17
Third Sunday in Lent	95 or 95:6-11	Exodus 17:1-7 Romans 5:1-11 John 4:5-26(27-38)39-42
Fourth Sunday in Lent	23	1 Samuel 16:1-13 Ephesians 5:(1-7)8-14 John 9:1-13(14-27)28-38
Fifth Sunday in Lent	130	Ezekiel 37:1-3(4-10)11-14 Romans 6:16-23 John 11:(1-17)18-44
Palm Sunday		
Liturgy of the Palms	118:19-29	Matthew 21:1-11
Liturgy of the Word	22:1-21 or 22:1-11	Isaiah 45:21-25 or Isaiah 52:13--53:12 Philippians 2:5-11 Matthew (26:36-75)27:1-54 (55-56)

THE GREAT VIGIL:
THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Easter 1981

Christ Church Parish

The First Reading	Genesis 1:1-2:2	The Story of Creation
The Second Reading	Genesis 22:1-18	The Faithfulness of Abraham
The Third Reading	Exodus 14:10-15-1	Deliverance at the Red Sea
The Fourth Reading	Isaiah 55:1-11	Salvation Offered Freely to All
The Fifth Reading	Ezekiel 36	A New Heart and a New Spirit
Reading from the	Apostolic Letters	Romans 6:3-11
Proclamation of the	Holy Gospel	Matthew 28:1-10

APPENDIX #5

BOOKLET

A 10-page booklet summarizing in words and pictures, prepared and bound in the library copy of the project. Copies are available from the author.

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